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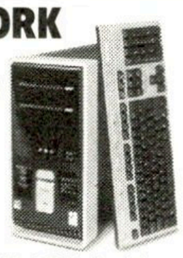

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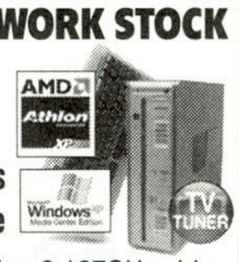

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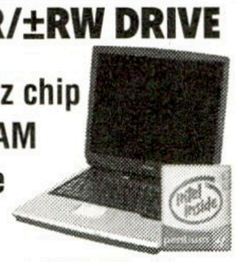

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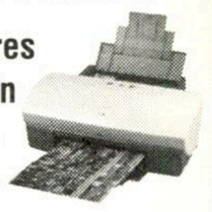

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In the City

CONFIRMATION after almost three years that the Serious Farce Office intends to prosecute over the alleged £400m generic drugs fraud on the National Health Service is expected to concentrate the minds of those involved. Up to now they have seen the investigation as little more than an evidence gathering exercise for the parallel civil proceedings.

During a hearing in those civil proceedings last week, it emerged that the SFO had revealed its plans to bring charges in September or October. This follows interviews of targeted directors and executives expected to take place in the summer, probably in June or July.

Sources close to the investigation say it is anticipated that up to 10 individuals will be charged, along with six to eight companies. All are expected to be charged with conspiracy to defraud in relation to the price-fixing of, and overcharging for, generic drugs supplied to the NHS from 1997. The expectation is that there will be two trials starting in 2007 with the defendants facing one conspiracy charge in each trial. Some individuals and companies are expected to be scheduled for both trials.

To date there has been no sign that any of the six main companies under investigation is prepared to break ranks and look for a deal on both the civil and criminal cases. But that could change once the senior targets are given sight of the outline case against them. This will happen once they are summoned for interview under caution.

The problem for some of those targeted is that their interests may not be identical to those of the three multinational companies – particularly if they are no longer employed by the company. This is not the case with the three smaller companies where there is little or no conflict between the interests of the directors and the companies because the individuals are the company – being key executives and the major owners.

However, there have been some signs of movement in the corporate tectonic plates: a number of possibly implicated executives have left some of the six companies initially raided in April 2002. Five senior executives from the US-owned Norton Healthcare, including founder and Labour donor Isaac Kaye, have since resigned. The undoubtedly innocent Kaye was the subject of a generic drugs probe in South Africa. There have also been resignations at the German-owned Generics(UK). For its owners, Ivax and Merck, the choice comes down very much to money – especially if those on the SFO's most wanted list are history. The third multinational is the Indian group Ranbaxy.

How much will it take in compensation payments to the NHS to rid them of this highly troublesome matter? If the directors are still employed then the dance has to be a little more delicate. But in the past that is how large corporations have dealt with price-fixing or similar corporate crimes.

The problem for the companies is that the SFO and the NHS have some similar but some distinctly separate agendas. While the two NHS civil actions are essentially only about recovering money, the SFO case is that the companies have committed a crime and should not be able to buy their way out from underneath. The test of that resolve will come when there are big cheques being waved around in return for an omnibus settlement of both civil and criminal matters.

The companies are unlikely to want to settle the civil case unless they can be assured that there will be no criminal charges and vice versa. So far they have been told there is no deal. And once there are charges, the civil case will be put on hold. But once there are charges it could also then be very difficult to explain why they have been dropped – a decision that could probably only be made by the attorney-general in the supposed public interest. So the window for a deal is closing if charges are indeed to be brought in the autumn.

Those who expect a deal even after charges point to the fact that the SFO investigation only started as a result of pressure on the A-G and the SFO from the department of health which wanted to be seen as being tough on NHS fraud. There is also the advantage that a deal would present in terms of saving the multi-millions two trials would cost as well as the risk – not inconsiderable – that the prosecution, the first of its kind, could fail with all the resulting embarrassment.

However, a decision to call off the SFO dogs just because large cheques had been handed over by rich companies would send a bad signal that justice could be bought. It would take some selling: not just publicly but within the SFO too.

For the smaller companies the risks are much greater. At the listed Goldshield Group, chief executive Ajit Patel as well as co-founder and chief operating officer Kirti Patel are both in the SFO's sights.

At privately-owned Kent Pharmaceuticals, chairman and largest shareholder Denis O'Neill is a target. Kent has already spent more than £1m in legal costs on the criminal and civil cases and is currently heading to the European court of human rights on aspects of the case believed to involve the disclosure of seized documents by the SFO to the NHS for use in the civil proceedings. The NHS is claiming at least £58m from all the companies in the two actions.

Another of the smaller private companies, Regent-GM Laboratories, is controlled by enormously wealthy London-based Iraqi businessman and friend of the politically famous, Nadhmi Auchi. Despite such a pedigree, Regent went into liquidation a year ago owing £17m to its creditors, mainly Auchi's General Mediterranean Holding group. So its position in any future civil or criminal proceedings may be a matter for the liquidator as well as Auchi who was convicted of corruption in France in 2003 as part of the Elf scandal.

The liquidation followed a decision to cease manufacturing and switch to outsourcing for Regent's supplies. However, the SFO investigation will not go away and presents at the very least embarrassment in particular for Auchi's daughter Luma as well as to her co-directors, former Tory health minister Gerald Malone and Baroness (Marcia) Falkender, former personal secretary to Labour prime minister Harold Wilson. Marcia resigned in 2003 as a non-executive director after six years – no doubt unrelated to the SFO investigation. Malone joined in 1999. Not to mention the embarrassment for Auchi's other friends in high places, such as Labour MP Keith Vaz, as well as former Liberal leader Lord (David) Steel and ex-Tory chancellor Lord (Norman) Lamont.

For these smaller companies an SFO prosecution is likely to mean senior executive directors in the dock facing the prospect, if convicted, of prison sentences. There will be no underlings to scapegoat. Whether that will see a rush to cut a deal in return for testimony and no prison time remains to be seen; but there is likely to be a lot of thinking along those lines in coming months.

Meanwhile the SFO has continued to compile evidence from a growing number of lesser figures who are prepared to provide statements in return for not joining their bosses, former bosses and business associates, in the frame. This evidence together with the paper trail provided by the millions of documents seized in the raids has formed the basis for what legal sources say the SFO considers a very strong case.

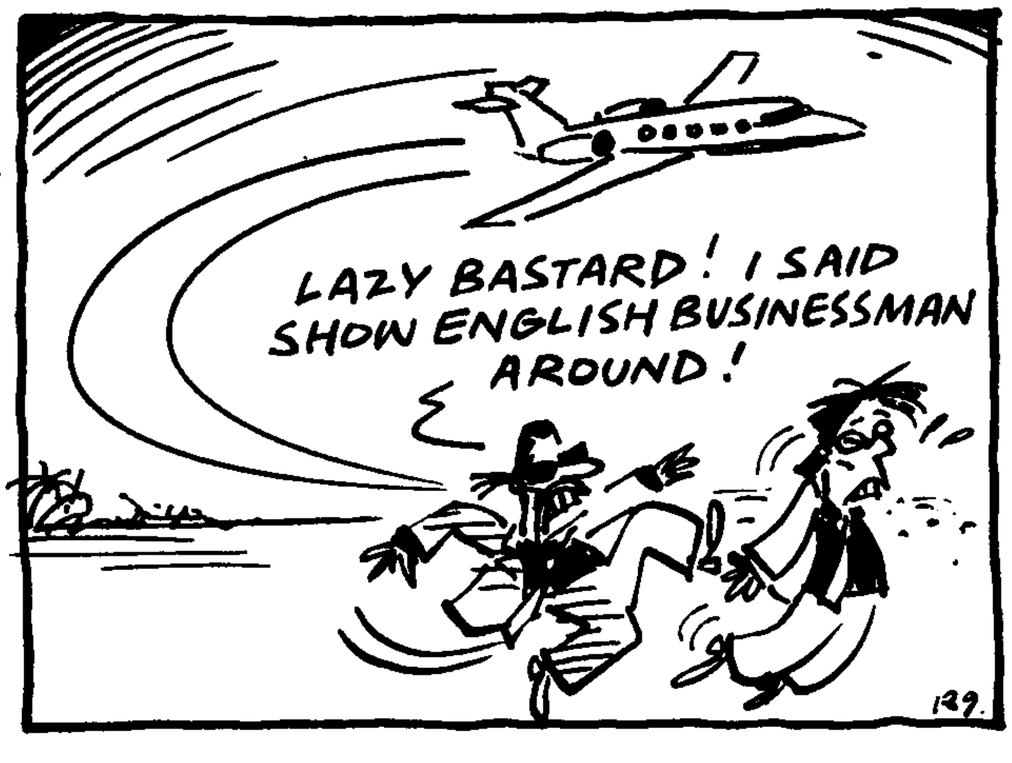
This is expected to back up the central allegation that the companies collaborated to not just fix prices and production of supposedly cheap generic forms of penicillin-based antibiotics and the blood thinning agent warfarin, but also set out penalties for those who broke the cartel rules. The secret arrangements were orchestrated at a series of minuted hotel meetings near London's Heathrow airport. The companies appear to have decided to enter into these agreements in part to compensate for higher packaging costs imposed by the NHS.

So far the companies all deny any illegal collusion or price-fixing wrongdoing. They are also expected to challenge the criminality of any prosecution on the basis that if there had been a cartel, then this was a civil competition law matter and should be dealt with by the new competition commission.

The SFO argument against that is expected to be that in order to operate the cartel deceived the NHS about its costs and prices, thereby causing

THE DIRECTORS

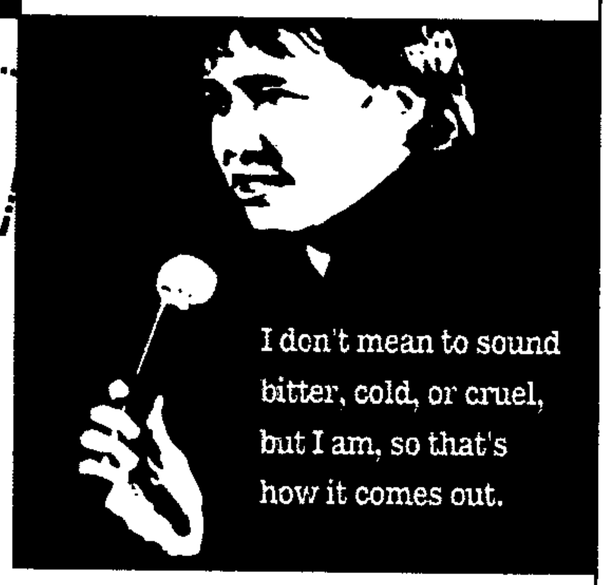
DREDGE & RIGG



TEALADY

I have a cunning plan sir!

Bliar



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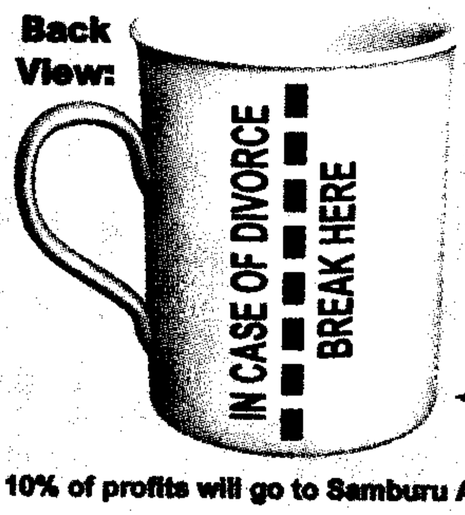


10% of profits will go to Samburu Aid in Afric

Announcement

Mr Brown will be making his annual presentation of the parish accounts on Wednesday. We can expect Mr Brown to tell us how well he has done balancing the books and all that sort of thing and, to be honest, some people really can be a bore on their pet subject, can't they? Wasn't there something in the Good Book about hiding your light under a bushell? Gordon, please note! T.B.

The Vicar's Mission To Women

Are women in the parish being heard?

The vicar has decided it's time to go out and listen to what the ladies of St Albion's have to say. This week he will be fulfilling the following engagements:

Monday

The Cosmopolitan Fellowship, Marcelle D'Argy Smith Hall

The Vicar will be answering questions on abortion, sexually-transmitted diseases and foot fetishism.

Tuesday

Women Against The War, Galloway Assembly Rooms

The Vicar will not be answering questions about the war.

Wednesday

Women's Institute Coffee Morning, The Florence Nightingale Suite, Ramada Hotel

The Vicar will be thanking the ladies for the delicious coffee and home-made biscuits.

Thursday

Mothers and Toddlers Group, The Kimberly Quinn Centre

The Vicar will be spelling out the importance of the family and urging more women to go out to work.

Friday

St Albion's Hospital Radio, "Women Matters"

The Vicar will be talking to presenter Jilly Duffer and playing some of his favourite records.

Saturday

Reading Group at Mrs Morris's

The Vicar drops in at the local book group, where the ladies have been reading Cherie Booth's brilliant new best-seller 'Inside The Vicarage – A Woman's View'

Sunday

Women's Only Service

The Vicar will preach on the text "God The Mother". No hymns.

Thought For The Week

The Vicar has chosen a special text:

"The first shall be last and the last first and the race shall not go to the swift nor the battle to the strong and I didn't lose last week just because the others won in fact I won because I was right all along" *(Book of Judges, Lords and Traitors, 12.4)*

'BLOODY NOSE DAY' A HOWLING SUCCESS

by Our Comedy Staff **Bill Thrownout**

THE organisers of last week's Bloody Nose Day in the House of Commons have described it as an uproariously funny success.

The event, to raise much-needed anti-terror laws onto the statute books on behalf of under-privileged Al Qaeda terror suspects, was a humorous spectacle for the whole country.

Highlights included the sight of hundreds of grown men, wearing full-lenth ermine gowns, attempting to insert a sunset clause into the bill, Michael Howard and Tony Blair performing the classic 'I'm The Only Conservative In The Village' sketch from Little Britain and Charles Clarke dressing himself up as David Blunkett as he dug himself deeper and deeper into a hole filled with baked beans, whilst scores of Labour back-bench MPs performed somersaults after being whipped.

"This will go down as one of the funniest weeks in the Commons history. Bloody Nose Day must surely become an annual event."

ALZHEIMER DRUG BREAKTHROUGH

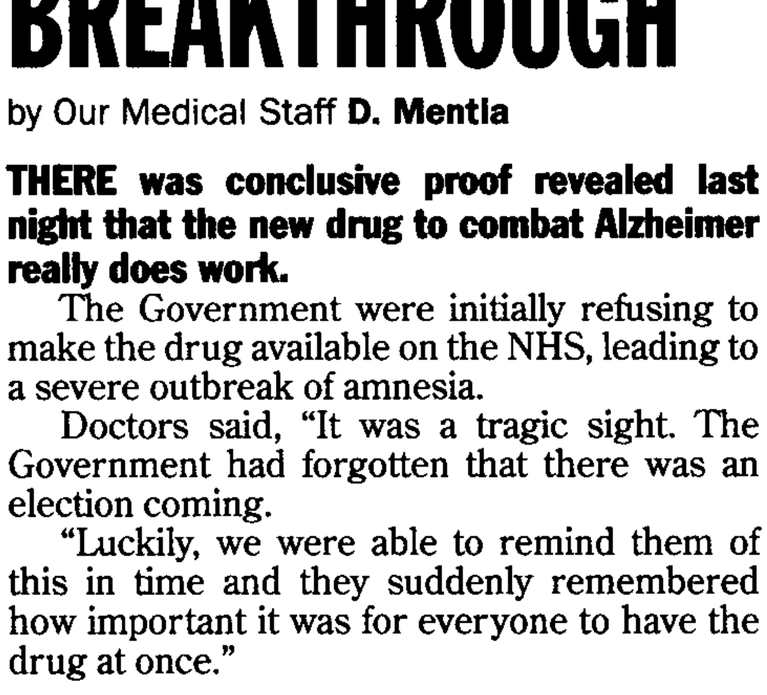
by Our Medical Staff **D. Mentia**

THERE was conclusive proof revealed last night that the new drug to combat Alzheimer really does work.

The Government were initially refusing to make the drug available on the NHS, leading to a severe outbreak of amnesia.

Doctors said, "It was a tragic sight. The Government had forgotten that there was an election coming.

"Luckily, we were able to remind them of this in time and they suddenly remembered how important it was for everyone to have the drug at once."



"Oh no! It's Typical Man!!"

"That's all he's got, luv – 2 tickets for 'Phantom'"

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

DELIA SMITH

As the country's leading cooking expert, are there any particular spoons you would recommend?

Yes... a great big ladle full of cooking sherry, fill it right up to the brim, pour it out with a steady hand... whoops... then slug it all back.

Are spoons very important in your work?

You can shay that again! Spoons! Spoons! Teashpoons... tableshpoons... big wooden shpoons... Let's be having you! Come on, you spoons!

● Unfortunately, this week's spoon interview had to be cut short due to circumstances beyond our control. Delia Smith's new book, *Drinking For One*, is available in all good shops.

NEXT WEEK: *Anne Diamond, 'Me And My Diamond'.*

DESPERATE BLAIR WOOS THE WOMEN'S VOTE

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DETENTION CENTRES

Capital punishment

NEW Labour's blind faith in the ability of obscure private equity firms to run difficult public services was perfectly articulated in May last year by government minister Lord (John) Bassam.

He was asked about the suitability of Bridgepoint Capital (then advised by Alan Milburn) to buy Global Solutions Ltd (GSL), and with it three large immigration detention centres, from Danish owners Group 4 Falck. Lib Dem spokesman Lord Avebury wanted to know if the government would make the sale conditional on the implementation of the 29 recommendations made by the Shaw inquiry into racism at Yarl's Wood, another GSL detention centre.

Bassam confidently reassured peers: "I have no doubt that [the recommendations] will be studied very closely and that the important and salient conclusions which Stephen Shaw (pictured below) reached will find their way into improving the quality of practice across the detention centre and prison estate."

Within weeks GSL was sold not to Bridgepoint but to two other private equity firms, Electra Partners and Englefield Capital, with no mention of action on Shaw's 29 recommendations.

So how has GSL improved the "quality of practice" in its detention centres under its new private equity masters? The answer emerged graphically in the recent BBC documentary exposing rampant physical and racial abuse at Oakington, yet another GSL detention centre, following which 15 staff have been suspended. Once again, home office minister Des Browne has turned to prisons ombudsman Stephen Shaw to investigate.

PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

Last orders

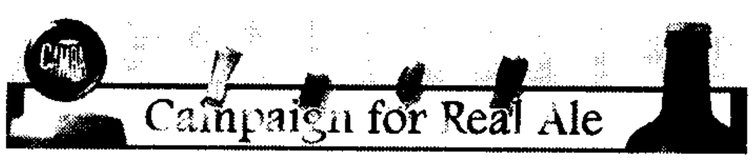
MORE well-loved pubs are being swallowed up by property developers wanting to cash in on high house prices (*Eye 1123*).

In the Yorkshire village of Hutton Cranswick, the last remaining pub faces conversion into four homes. The Cross Keys has already called last orders, but despondent locals are hoping for a reprieve if the owners fail to get planning permission.

It's not just in pretty rural villages that developers are grabbing pubs when they come up for sale. Leisure Inns has applied for permission to demolish the 200-year-old Graziers pub in Wakefield and replace it with 20 apartments. Regulars are compiling a petition.

The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) estimates that around 20 pubs a month are being closed down, most of which are perfectly viable and often very popular businesses. With house prices so high, however, the large buildings can be cashed in for a fortune.

Last month CAMRA produced a "public house viability test" to help councils decide if developers' claims that a pub business is failing are true. "It is not unknown for potential developers to run a public house down with the intention of making a quick buck by converting it into housing," said CAMRA boss Mike Benner.



PENSIONS SPECIAL

Full Marks?

WHEN pensions secretary Alan Johnson was looking for someone to chair the new pensions regulator, he turned to David Norgrove, former private secretary to Margaret Thatcher and a one-time director of Marks & Spencer and chairman of its pension fund trustees.

Mr Johnson was sure Norgrove would bring "highly relevant knowledge, skills and experience" in carrying out the statutory objective of the regulator to protect pension scheme members' benefits. And who could doubt it?

When Mr Norgrove was in charge of the M&S pension fund, it held most of its assets in shares throughout the falling stock market of the early 2000s, with the result that by the end of 2003 it had a shortfall of £585m.

Digging a hole

ACCOUNTANCY firm KPMG is forever telling others, including the government, how to run their financial affairs. But it can't even run its own pension scheme properly.

According to a number of former partners, KPMG is being both "dishonourable" and "greedy" in its treatment of its pensioners. This stems from the discovery in 2002 of a £70m hole in the KPMG pension scheme.

The fund administrator, Capita, asked KPMG to make good the shortfall; but KPMG refused and replaced Capita with a new trustee, Aon, a firm with which it had many other business links.

Hilariously (unless you happen to be a KPMG pensioner) the financial geniuses at the firm claimed not to know if their very own pension fund was a "defined benefit" or a "defined contribution" scheme. The former guarantees pensioners a set payout, like a final salary-based pension, so any shortfall would have to be made up by the firm. The latter, a "money purchase" scheme, pays out what's in the pot, leaving it to pensioners to make good the shortfall or live on less.

The pension fund trustees asked the courts to settle the matter and last July the high court decided that KPMG and its lawyers didn't know what they were talking about: the scheme was "defined benefit" and KPMG must cough up the cash. KPMG claims a £247m profit for 2004, so it can afford it.

However, after six former partners wrote to KPMG boss Mike Rake urging him to fill the pensions hole "to avoid KPMG being viewed as greedy and dishonourable in obtaining commercial advantage at the expense of pensioners and staff", the firm decided to appeal. The courts will reconsider the scheme in May.

Feat of clay

FRENCH giant Imerys, which owns English China Clay in Cornwall, has announced that it is to cut the pensions of its Cornish workers.

The move comes after the firm ignored the advice of half its pension fund trustees and decided to stop contributing to its own pension fund.

Around 2,500 English China Clay employees will now see their final pension cut by a third, and new staff will not be able to join the scheme at all.

Employees, represented by the TGWU, are angry because Imerys took a pensions holiday between 2000 and 2003, despite opposition from pension fund trustees elected by staff. The management appointees supported the move – and, surprise, surprise, they have more votes on the board.

The contributions holiday cost the fund around £9m, at least a quarter of the newly-discovered shortfall. TGWU representative Dave Springbett told *Private Eye* that his staff now know why "Imerys" is an anagram of "Misery". Though Imerys's latest financial statements claim a "general upturn in business" and all round "improved results", it's not enough, apparently, to preserve pensions.

It's a racket

THE government's new pension protection fund (PPF) might be expected to invest the money it collects from occupational pension schemes cautiously so that it earns stable, reliable returns with which to provide pensions to members of failed schemes.

But that would be too boring, so the PPF has turned to the most enterprising of bankers, Barclays, to find a director of investment.

Partha Dasgupta, currently a managing director at Barclays Global Investors, will manage all the assets and finances of the organisation and will be responsible for the levy on pension funds to pay for it.

Dasgupta's credentials include developing investment strategies for many occupational pension schemes. It is not clear whether these included the kind of high risk share-based strategies that have left many such funds with heavy deficits or, worse, in a state of collapse from which they will have to be rescued by the PPF.

PS: Keeping Dasgupta in line will be PPF chairman Lawrence Churchill who, as revealed in *Eye* 1107, demonstrated his concern for people's pensions by mis-selling thousands of them in the 1980s and 90s.

Town fall

IT'S not just private sector pensioners who are suffering: deputy prime minister John Prescott is hitting public sector pensions too.

Legislation this April will cut benefits in the local government pay scheme. Town hall staff with long service who can currently retire from the age of 60 onwards, must now work to 65 to receive their full pension. Staff made redundant will also have to wait longer for pensions.

A spokesman for Prescott told the *Eye* that because "on average people live longer" the cuts were necessary for the "long term affordability and sustainability of the scheme". However, the Conservatives' much-loved poll tax is also at least partly responsible. In a futile effort to reduce the tax's unpopularity, the then Tory government said councils could take a pensions holiday and use the money to keep down local taxes. Hence both Conservative and Labour councils across the country took "contributions holidays" around 1990. By the time councils were told to make up the shortfall in the mid 1990s, the stock market was much less favourable.

Council staff in Unison, the TGWU and UCATT who are balloting for strike action over the cuts can take comfort that, according to Prescott's spokesman, the reforms are partly to do with "work life balance" as it is not always a good idea to be "working one day then completely stop work the next day".

PS: WHY on earth is the *Financial Times* getting into bed with Axa Investment Management, which will help judge the paper's new "pensions manifesto challenge"?

The pink 'un is asking its astute readers to write 1,000 words on how they would solve the pensions crisis; and Axa will be helping pick the best entry.

Previously, under the Axa Equity and Law banner, the company was identified as one of the early private pensions mis-sellers. Nearly five years ago it caused uproar by claiming half the "orphan", ie unclaimed, assets in its funds, leaving only half for its policyholders. This was despite treasury guidance that 90 percent should go to savers. And more recently, unabashed, Axa spent a couple of years pushing two of its savings (sic) products – the bonus cash-builder plus and the guaranteed over 50 plan – with misleading and inaccurate advertising. In December it was fined a whopping £500,000 for what the financial services authority (FSA) called "a far-reaching media campaign... putting a significant number of consumers at risk".

DOING THE ROUNDS

Surgical accountability

JUST 13 years after M.D. exposed the Bristol heart scandal and suggested that heart surgeons should put their names to their results, those in north-west England have done just that.

The 25 trail-blazers published three years of data on coronary artery bypass graft and aortic valve replacement in the *British Medical Journal* (5 March). The figures are adjusted for risk so as not to discriminate against those who take on harder surgery in sicker patients. All of the results compared well with the national average.

Contrast this spirit of openness and proven competence from heart surgeons with the audit of endocrine surgeons carried out by the Royal College of Surgeons on behalf of the British Association of Endocrine Surgeons (BAES).

Contributing to this audit is an obligation of membership of BAES and information on three procedures, surgical removal of the thyroid, parathyroid and adrenal glands, is collected. So far, so good. Alas, this is done on anonymised returns (surgeons are allocated a number) and when the audit is published only the individual surgeon can identify himself or herself and decide if any action is appropriate.

The absurdity of this is apparent when the results of the 2000-2002 audit are analysed. This has thus far only been circulated to BAES members; but M.D. has seen the results for thyroid and parathyroid surgery and there are an alarming number of unidentifiable surgeons dabbling with this highly complex neck surgery. Some are averaging one operation (or fewer) a year. When M.D. asked a BAES executive committee member if he would allow such a surgeon to operate on him, or on a member of his family, the answer was an obvious "no". Yet he seemed powerless to do anything about it.

A start would be to kick the dabblers out of BAES. The National Institute of Clinical Excellence has recently published guidelines for the head and neck cancer services, stressing the need for a specialist approach; and the BAES has its own guidelines for thyroid surgery which stipulate "all thyroid surgery should be performed by surgeons with a special interest and training in thyroid surgery and whose volume of work is sufficient to maintain their relevant skills." And yet some BAES members clearly flout this advice.

The climate in which surgeons now operate is tough: while physicians and GPs regularly get away with mixing the blue pill up with the purple one, surgical errors are much harder to hide. Reductions in junior doctors' hours have meant that surgeons are far less experienced than before, and new consultants don't have the competence to take on the full range of operations expected of them. Half of the surgeons currently suspended are those within six months of taking up their consultant posts, and although the process of investigation is supposed to be "blame neutral", many careers are being ended before they begin.

The tragedy is that in many cases surgeons are competent across a range of common procedures but muck up on the harder or rarer ones. What's needed is for surgeons to regulate themselves and swiftly prevent their colleagues from attempting the complex procedures they aren't able to do. The alternative is a knee jerk suspension by management, or a retrospective inquiry that causes huge professional damage.

M.D.

Margaret's shoulder

WHAT anaesthetist in his or her right mind would want to put Margaret Dixon to sleep?

Patients don't come much higher risk (she is obese, diabetic, bronchitic and with both heart and renal failure) and shoulder surgery is seldom very successful. Her case says nothing about the state of the NHS other than that doctors choose who has surgery on the basis of how necessary it is and how likely the patient is to survive. For some people, a two-year wait for surgery can increase your life expectancy by, er, two years.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY

SIGNAL FAILURES

Outdoing Thatcher

"NEW" Labour has quietly dropped the idea of reining in the rolling-stock companies (Roscos) because it prefers to cut services and raise fares to make ends meet.

Last July transport secretary Alistair Darling promised to address problems stemming from 1996, when the Tories sold British Rail's trains to the Roscos for a song so the Roscos could lease the trains at high rates. "The renewal of these leases in the same form would be poor value. So, as passenger franchises are replaced we will deal with these problems and drive a better deal for the public," he said.

But the subject isn't mentioned in the railways bill now in parliament, so the Roscos will still hold a gun to the heads of train operators and government when leases for low-quality local trains are negotiated. Regional networks have seen the fastest passenger growth of all, and with too few trains to go around it's impossible to bargain with the Roscos.

The Roscos may concede more reasonable deals when new trains are ordered, as the clients can shop around; but that leaves the Roscos needing disproportionate income from the dwindling pool of ex-BR trains to maintain collective profits of around £170m a year.

Intercity routes are also affected. In December GNER chief executive Christopher Garnett said: "In any other industry, as an asset gets older the people leasing it would pay less." And his boss, James Sherwood, told Darling: "A huge amount of money is being thrown away to the Roscos. It's grotesque and the government should... immediately put a stop to that."

Hundreds of useful intercity carriages are rotting in sidings, supposedly redundant; rail subsidy is already five times what BR got, and that's without another gigantic leasing bill from the Roscos for those carriages. It's easier for "new" Labour to force people on to the roads than exploit the nation's rail assets.

Under BR, local trains in relatively deprived areas were sustained, despite Margaret Thatcher's eye-watering subsidy cuts, because their costs were considered marginal to the network as a whole (*Eye* 1101). Now they pay top whack for track access and to lease old trains, so costs far outweigh the fares collected. Labour's response is not to restore the principle of marginal costs but to outdo Thatcher and decimate services. Already it's proposed closing five stations, and the railways bill is designed to make closures easier for ministers and bureaucrats (*Eye* 1122).

Consultants are being called in to produce a cost-cutting plan for the new Northern Rail franchise, which covers a third of England. Labour has told officials to delay the job until "the political issues around it have been resolved" -- ie until people have returned Labour to office.

West Midlands trains are so busy after 44 percent growth in 10 years that Labour wants to raise peak fares 20 percent over five years to force the poorest people off them (outdoing Thatcher again). It does plan longer trains for Birmingham, but by slashing services between smaller places like Walsall and Wolverhampton to release extra carriages. Providing enough trains to meet demand isn't an option when so much cash goes on leasing 20-year-old trains.

Of course the Roscos can't afford to be charitable in their lease charges. One is owned by HSBC, which only managed a £9.2bn profit last year. Another is a subsidiary of Royal Bank of Scotland, which had to make do on a 2004 profit of just £8.1bn. Porterbrook is owned by Abbey, subject of a multibillion-pound takeover offer from Spain's Banco Santander.

'Dr B. Ching'

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SPEECHWRITING by Britain's leading professional, Mitch Murray – see page 34

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MOUNTING DEBTS due to illness. Any help appreciated. S/C: 80-07-14. A/C: 07012360.

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D.U.K.W. WWII AMPHIBIAN restoration project. Need money / welding / tools / steel. dukw@hotmail.co.uk Reply Box 125594.

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PRIVATE EYE

MICHAEL HOWARD INTRODUCES HIS FAMILY

LAST YEAR the *Eye* reported on the muddle Labour MPs with large numbers of Muslim constituents had got themselves into over the issue of halal meat.

East End MPs such as Oona King, Jim Fitzpatrick and Tony Banks had all declared that halal and kosher slaughter – in which an animal is killed by having its throat cut and bleeding to death – is cruel. This was after the Farm Animal Welfare Council had reported that animals killed in this way suffer "severe trauma" as they take two minutes or more to die.

Spotting an opportunity, George Galloway, who will be standing against Oona King in Bethnal Green and Bow on behalf of the Sir-I-Salute-Your-Indefatigability party (aka Respect), said that many Labour MPs put the treatment of animals before the religious feelings of Muslims. "I would be very glad to open up a debate on this issue," he said (*Eye* 1116).

Now Tony Blair himself has stepped in to that debate – and said clearly that reassuring Muslims comes before the prevention of cruelty to animals. He has written to Oona King: "I understand that some of your constituents are concerned that there may be a ban on the production of halal meat in this country. I can assure you and your constituents that we will not do anything which would affect the right of Muslims to produce and consume halal meat."

This goes *against* the stance of the department for the environment, food and rural affairs, which says: "On balance, animals (especially cattle) slaughtered without pre-stunning are likely to experience very significant pain and distress."

So the party which took a £1m donation from the International Fund for Animal Welfare before the 1997 election and which recently abolished hunting with dogs is all in favour of allowing animals to have their throats slit and bleed to death on the floor. Funny old world.

A WESTMINSTER turf war is being fought in Doncaster North where MP Kevin Hughes delayed announcing his retirement long enough to hand control of the selection of his successor to the party's national executive committee. The NEC can now effectively parachute a loyalist into the former mining constituency. But whose loyalist will inherit?

Gordon Brown's economics advisor Ed Miliband (little brother of schools minister David) has been escorted round by constituency secretary Chris "the Slug" Taylor ["He leaves slime wherever he goes"]. Taylor and Doncaster mayor Martin Winter believe Miliband will bring gifts from a grateful Gordon. These could be much needed in a benighted borough where – an ambitious, job-creating scheme for a state-of-the-art combined heat and power plant centred around Hatfield colliery in Stainforth have collapsed in acrimony.

Hundreds of miners have been made redundant, while the pit – which has 50 percent of the country's reserves of coal – stands idle.

However, the outgoing Hughes is pushing the candidature of Michael Dugher, Blairite special adviser to Hughes's best buddy, Geoff Hoon. An unsuccessful Labour candidate at the 2001 election, former head of policy at the AEEU, speech-writer to Frank Dobson and one-time regional convener for the National Union of Students in the Midlands, Dugher was once described by Warwick University Labour club as a "maniacal power-hungry psychopath who would willingly screw over anyone to get his corrupt and mentally-deficient mates elected" as delegates to a student conference.

Just the man to succeed Kevin Hughes, then!

EUROSCEPTIC MEP Ashley Mote looked isolated when he was suspended by UKIP, but his website suggests he still has some friends.

According to Mote's internet diary, he spoke at the Durham Union Society, Durham University's version of the Oxford Union, on the motion: "This House believes there is no such thing as Britishness" on 25 February. Which is strange, because the debate was actually scheduled for March, and the Durham Union told *Private Eye* that Ashley Mote was not one of the speakers: Dr Julie Smith, Keith Robbins, Sir Bernard Crick and Piers Merchant were invited, but not Mote.

Mote's website also said he would be addressing meetings in Boston, Lincolnshire, and Skegness in February, but European parliament records show he was in Brussels asking questions about banknotes and driving licences on those days. *Private Eye* asked Mote to explain the discrepancy, but he did not reply.

The confusion about Mote's whereabouts might have upset Eurosceptics keen to hear his words. But it also caused difficulty for his former research assistant, Paul Wesson, who wanted to track Mote down and serve him papers claiming unpaid wages.

"The Whatevers have it"

IT NEWS

"THIS group of companies have international experience of delivery of first-class IT systems," said defence minister Lord Bach, announcing the granting of preferred bidder status for a £4bn information systems contract to the Atlas consortium.

And who are these companies supposedly delivering first-class IT systems? Shurely not the disaster-prone EDS, which *Eye 1121* reported was leading the Atlas consortium into the bid?

The bid was submitted just days after EDS was responsible for the biggest crash in UK computing history, with 80,000 department of work and pensions computers going down, delaying benefits claims for days.

If EDS is delivering first-class IT systems, the *Eye* would like to know where. It certainly isn't in the UK's public sector.

SINCE when has it been the job of the home office to provide instructions for Microsoft software?

Touted as "easy-to-understand and simple independent advice for non-technically minded people," Itsafe.com is yet another new government-funded website, this time "drawing on the expertise of the National Infrastructure Security Co-ordination Centre" to encourage virus prevention.

Two weeks after its launch, guidance on offer merely extended to "How to update Windows XP", "How to update Microsoft Office", "How to use Windows Automatic Update" and, er, that's it.

THE appointment of Willie Walsh, former boss of Aer Lingus, as CEO of British Airways was announced to the company's various business associates by email on 8 March.

All, that is, except for Birmingham International Airport, whose automated security software returned the message because "it has been identified as containing a number of words which could possibly be deemed unsuitable for use in a business environment".

Mr Walsh had better take care not to introduce himself by his Christian name in future…

The Curse of Gnome

NO sooner had the *Eye*'s correspondent in Sierra Leone highlighted the troubles besetting the war crimes tribunal in Freetown than chief prosecutor David Crane announced that he was bailing out.

Crane, an obscure US military lawyer hardly renowned as a human rights expert, told the BBC he had promised his wife he would only do the job for three years and his time is up in July. That, of course, was when the trial (and any appeals) of the nine accused of atrocities during the decade-long civil war were predicted to end. But the trial is far from over and it will be years before any appeals are exhausted.

Crane is unlikely to be much missed. With none of the real villains in the dock, the sight of an evangelical US military prosecutor linking hands with Britain and Nigeria to pursue Sierra Leone's still serving deputy minister of defence, Chief Sam Hinga Norman, was never going to go down well. Especially as Hinga Norman had been encouraged by the US and British-funded mercenaries in the bloody fight to restore democracy. And especially as the US refuses to subject its citizens to the international criminal court.

PS: The *Eye* apologises for suggesting the new "special court" building alone cost US$60m. We should have made it clear that court building cost $3.7m and that the $60m covered the entire trials process. But even that would have been wrong: the figure is $82m for the three years so far… and rising.

CRONIES CORNER

THE shake-up at the top of the scandal-ridden United Nations has created another opportunity for one of Tony's favourite cronies, Baroness Valerie Amos.

Amos, 50, has risen to the top in British politics without ever actually having been elected to anything. The Guyana-born former local government officer was chief executive of the equal opportunities commission from 1989 to 1994. Given a life peerage on Labour's election in 1997, she became a whip in 1998 and a spokesperson on international development, social security and wimmin's issues.

In 2001 she became a junior foreign office minister and joined the cabinet in 2003, replacing Clare Short as international development secretary. In support of the Bush-Blair 2003 campaign against Iraq, Amos was sent scuttling round Africa in an effort to sign up security council members to a second UN resolution shortly before bombing began.

Her first reward was to be made leader of the Lords in October 2003. Now Blair has nominated her to become head of the UN development programme (UNDP) – regarded as the number three job at the UN.

Number crunchings

£50m

■ Amount EU is spending on pan-European anti-smoking campaign

£600m

■ Amount EU spends on subsidies for tobacco growers each year

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

It was extremely unfortunate that so few parishioners bothered to turn up for the vicar's Lent Talk on Tuesday. I have therefore decided to reprint his very important message in full, so that all members of our congregation can get it into their thick skulls. Got it, scumbags?

A. Campbell, Acting Editor.

That Talk In Full

Hullo, and it's good to see so many of you here tonight, despite the wintry weather and the fact that the Chelsea game is on the TV! So if the three of you would like to come nearer to the front, I thought we could spend a few minutes looking at two of the most important words in the English language. I've written them up on these cards, so that those of you at the back can see them clearly. Not that there are any of you at the back, because you've all moved forwards.

And that's good too, because, as you know, that's our new parish mission statement: '*Forwards not backwards*'!

So, here are my two words. This first card says 'Freedom', and the other card reads 'Safety'.

And we want both of these things in this life, don't we? It's not a question of either/or. It's more a matter of both/and!

So, let's just look at those two big words, shall we? 'Freedom.' It's a wonderful thing, isn't it? We all want to be free, don't we?

We all want to be free to leave our homes whenever we like. Or make phone calls to our friends. Or send emails. Or have visits from our loved ones.

But, hey, let's bring in our other word, shall we? 'Safety.' Isn't that something else that we're keen on?

Don't we all remember the old saying, "Safety first"? And that's still as true today as it ever was!

And the important thing to realise is that you can't be free unless you are safe. You can't have one without the other. Are you with me? This is where the two big words that we're thinking about finally come together.

And this brings me to my third and final point.

What we want is the freedom to be safe!

Some of the older people in the parish, I know, can't really get their heads round this one!

A lot of the residents in our St Albion's Retirement Home have been muttering lately that nothing is more important than freedom and that somehow I am trying to take it away from them!

Goodness me, some of them really are getting old and suffering from dementia, aren't they?

Not that I want to embarrass them by naming them, but my old friend Mr Lairg was certainly acting very strangely when I saw him the other day staggering out of the Chancellor's Arms at half-past-three in the afternoon!

His face was very red, and he was obviously having difficulty walking in a straight line! No wonder he can't think straight when it comes to those Big Words!

But let's not bring this down to personalities, as some other people have been trying to do!

You haven't come here tonight to hear me being rude about my old friend Derry Lairg, just because he's always had a bit of a weakness for the bottle!

It would be quite wrong of me to dig up old stories about our former parish solicitor, such as the time when he fell asleep in the toilet and was locked into his office all night!

And, dear me, the next morning, when the cleaners found him, he couldn't even remember his own name!

Which brings me to my closing point, which is that if we need the freedom to be safe, we also need the safety to be free!

Next week's Lenten talk will be given by Dr John Reid under the title 'Who Are You Looking At, Jimmy?'. Tickets available from Mrs Blears. Let's have a good turn-out, shall we? Or John might get very annoyed and borrow a list of where you all live from our former churchwarden Mr Mandelson.

Parish Postbag

Dear Sir,

Could I use your columns to thank everyone for all their marvellous messages of support during what has been a very difficult time for me. I would like you all to know that I am now feeling much better than ever and I am ready to resume my duties on the PCC – should the vicar decide that my humble services are required! May I also thank the vicar for allowing me to remain in my 'grace-and-favour' residence during my enforced sabbatical.

His charitable response to my predicament makes a marked contrast to some of those spiteful parishioners who have seen fit to judge me and my behaviour in regard to Mrs Quinn.

I repeat that I have acted at all times with the utmost honesty and integrity – qualities that are sadly lacking in our parish affairs at the moment – and I hope to display these qualities once again at the PCC and provide a much-needed 'moral dimension' to St Albion's life.

Yours faithfully,
David Blunkett,
The Very Large House With
The Drive, Posh St, St Albion's.

The Editor reserves the right to print in full any letters that make the Vicar look like a decent bloke. A.C.

Mr Prescott – A Clarification

I want first of all to refute any inferences that whilst on Parish business I was staying in a poncy hotel in the South of France of the type the vicar likes to swan about in!

I did not stay nor was I ever going to stay in the Hotel Resplendente on the Cote d'Amour as was inaccurately reportaged in various St Albion's publications, ie the Clarion, the Mercury, the Advertiser and other rags.

The nub of the fact is that I stayed in a modest, five-star establishment called the Hotel Excelsior, tucked away on the front, which is patronised only by honest, working folk from Saudi Arabia, Switzerland and California. So apologies are in order with regard to this one from everyone concerned.

And whilst on the subject of apologies, may I secondly make it clear that I never said that the travelling folk could come and camp in your back garden if they felt like it. The records will prove that this remark was taken out of context and what I *really* was suggesting was that there is plenty of space in the Millennium Tent for as many of our Roaming friends as would wish to make it their home.

Understood? Thank you.

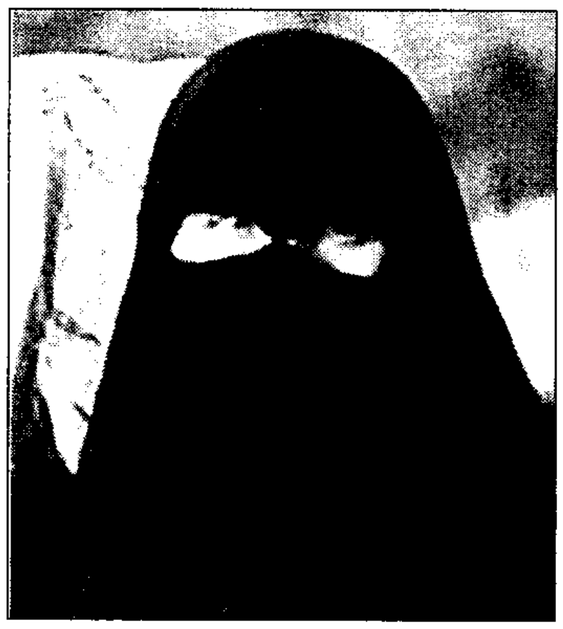
J. Prescott,
The Working Men's Club, Nice.

The Daily Tehranagraph

Friday March 18 2005

Schoolgirl loses fight to wear traditional dress

by our Educational Staff ***Michael Burka***



IN AN historic court ruling, the Iranian high court yesterday threw out the controversial bid by an English-born pupil for the right to wear the traditional gym-slip when attending school.

The judge listened with barely concealed impatience to evidence that in the girl's country of origin, wearing the gymslip was regarded as a very important cultural symbol.

For hundreds of years, the judge was told, female schoolchildren in the west had been expected to wear this traditional garment as a badge of uniformity and obedience to the strict code originally laid down by a sixth-century nun, St Trinian.

The judge angrily rejected all the arguments for the plaintiff, saying that it was a fundamental human right of all schoolgirls to wear any clothing they like, so long as it was black and full-length. *(Reuters)*

IDENTITY THEFT ON INCREASE

by Our Crime Staff **I.D. Card**

THERE has been a disturbing rise in the number of cases of identity theft, warned the police yesterday. Determined thieves are targeting and then impersonating innocent individuals in order to cash in on their assets.

The Tony Party

In one particularly shocking case, a Mr Howard of Transylvania found that he had all his policies stolen and the criminal wandered around Britain pretending to be him.

"It was uncanny," said Mr Howard. "I turned on the television and found this man talking about asylum, law and order, privatisation and superbugs in hospital as if he were me. It was so blatant. The only thing he hadn't stolen was my name, still calling himself Tony Blair. He must be caught before he defrauds me of the entire election."

Mr Blair is Mr Howard.

PAXMAN 'ATTACK DOG' ROW

by Our Media Staff
Kirsty Bark

BBC PRESENTER Jeremy Paxman was heavily criticised last night after comparing Labour Health Secretary Dr John Reid to "an attack dog".

Said a spokesman for the attack dog community, "How dare Paxman resort to this cheap stereotyping? Just because we bark a lot and occasionally bite people it doesn't mean that we are in any way similar to the Health Secretary".

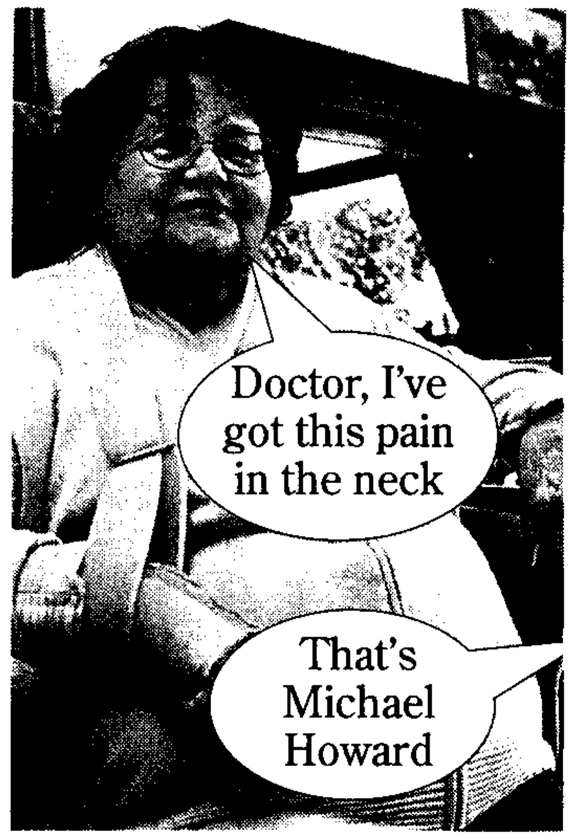
The Battle of Chip on Shoulder

He continued, "This is deeply offensive and based on ignorant prejudice against attack dogs, who are a cultured and civilised breed. I, for example, have a PhD in History of Art and love opera and fine wine. Mr Paxman makes these snobbish assumptions merely because I speak with a canine accent".

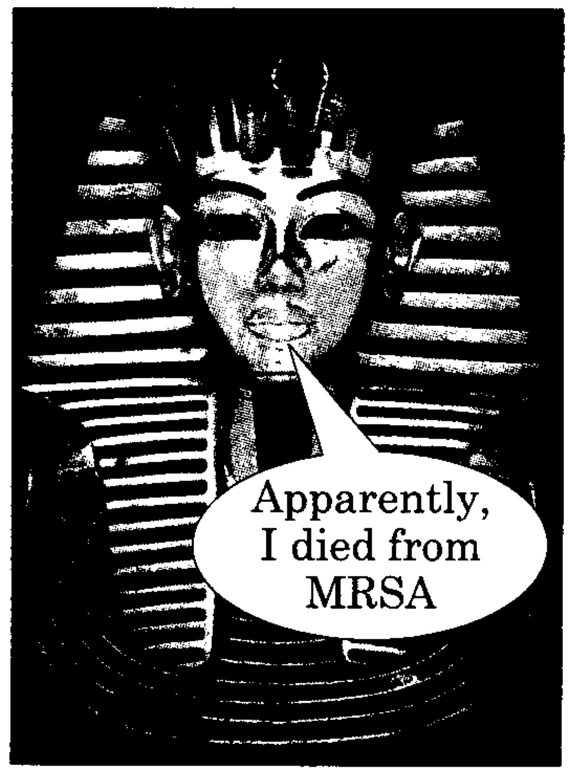
The spokesdog concluded, "It's nonsense. When was the last time you saw an attack dog talking rubbish about the health service or sniffing Tony Blair's bottom?".

Mr Paxman later apologised for any offence to attack dogs. "It was a metaphor, a figure of speech," he said. "We all know that attack dogs aren't literally like Dr Reid who, of course, should be kept on a tight leash and muzzled to protect the public."

TORIES BACK MARGARET DIXON



TUTANKHAMEN New Shock



the PREMIERSH*TS

PAUL WOOLEY

FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU!
FIFA
WE'VE DISCUSSED THE SWEARING SITUATION WITH THE REFEREES' ASSOCIATION...
FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU!
FIFA
AND THE CONSENSUS IS THAT A CARD MIGHT BE A BIT HARSH...
OFF!
UGH!
FIFA
SO WE'VE OPTED FOR A SOCK INSTEAD!

COUNCIL TO MAKE RUBBISH DECISION

Belper News

Street Of Shame

WITHER the libel writ served with much fanfare by the Conservative party on the *Times* last month? It concerned a story claiming that the party's election "guru" Lynton Crosbie had announced that the Tories "have no hope of winning the next general election".

On 11 March a small item appeared in the paper's news in brief column announcing that "the *Times* is very happy to make Mr Crosby's position clear." Bizarrely, it did so by quoting at length from a letter Crosby and the Conservative chairman Lord Saatchi sent the paper, boasting that "'second place' does not enter our vocabulary" – the same letter that the paper had already printed in full on 25 January, the day after the story appeared.

Since it wasn't good enough for the Tories then, it is unlikely to satisfy their wrath now. In the meantime, editor Robert Thomson appears to hope that a dose of pre-emptive brown-nosing will do the trick. A few pages on from the reheated clarification was an interview with Tory chairman Liam Fox conducted by Rosemary Bennet – one of the few political hacks on the paper not named in the party's writ.

"The Conservative Party is back in the game," it began. "In the past month it has have [sic] wrong-footed ministers with a succession of eye-catching, if not exactly new, policy announcements and triggered a bout of back-biting at Labour HQ. The polls may not show much movement but there is long enough to go before polling day still to have hope. Morale is high among staff at the new campaign headquarters on Victoria Street…"

THE *Daily Telegraph* published an unusually critical obituary of the American publisher Harold Brooks-Baker last week.

It described him as a "self-appointed authority on all matters royal: his great advantage was that he was always available to make an arresting comment; his disadvantage was that he was often wrong".

It added, snootily, that "if the tabloids and television continued to quote him, serious newspapers were careful to refer to him as head of Burke's Marketing Limited".

This may come as a surprise to *Daily Telegraph* readers who read a lengthy news article last month by its reporter Sally Pook on the Prince of Wales's marriage to Camilla Parker Bowles. Only one commentator was quoted, at great length: Harold Brooks-Baker, the "publishing director of Burke's Peerage".

SO FAREWELL, then, Mark Bolland, departing his position as the *(News of the) World*'s Worst Columnist just as the looming royal wedding means he might finally have something of interest to say.

Bolland's "Blackadder" column has been unceremoniously handed over to the paper's royal editor Clive Goodman, who is at least likely to provide some decent gossip about the denizens of Buckingham Palace, unlike Bolland, who preferred to hone his role as the gay male Lynda Lee-Potter (sample column: "Did you see the wonderful pictures of Carol Vorderman this week… At 43 she is an absolute stunner. Like a great wine, she just seems to improve with age.")

With Prince Charles' private secretary Michael Peat now firmly out of favour following the farce of the royal wedding plans, will we soon see his old rival Bolland (a favourite of Camilla's) back in his old office at St James' Palace, where he can devote his time to refuting the stories Goodman prints in the column he himself founded?

FROM the moment an RAF Hercules aircraft crashed north of Baghdad during the Iraqi elections on 30 January, killing the 15 British servicemen on board, the *Sun* was determined to find out who was to blame.

"WAS BOMB ON BOARD?" shrieked its front page headline on 1 February above the news that "military experts… fear an explosive device may have been planted aboard the C-130."

The following day hack Tom Newton Dunn reported that "the crew of the RAF Hercules that crashed in Iraq got out a desperate mayday message as they were going down, it was revealed last night… The revelation points strongly towards the theory than an explosive on board the aircraft caused the crash."

And on 10 February another 800-word *Sun* exclusive revealed that "a bomb was feared to be the most likely cause as it emerged the aircraft suddenly lost its entire 65ft right wing and was instantly sent into an uncontrollable spin."

Curiously, when the official RAF board of inquiry into the incident announced last week that a bomb was definitely not to blame, the *Sun* could only manage 28 words on the verdict, tucked away on page 2, the traditional "graveyard page" for stories the editor does not expect to be read.

THE NEOPHILIACS

"Being a professor is the new black." — *Guardian* education section.

"Vegan is the new black." — World Vegan Day website.

"Comedy bio-drama is the new black." — *Daily Telegraph*.

"Caravan holidays are the new black." — *Sunday Mirror*.

"PETE Doherty's fame is unlikely to last as long as Sir Mick Jagger's," Jasper Gerard informed *Sunday Times* readers on 6 February. "No one, not even *Newsnight Review*, could claim there is a cultural point to the boggle-eyed smackhead… Ghastly, yes; but at least no one thinks he's some kind of guru."

No one, that is, except the newspaper which ran a 1,700-word feature three weeks later on the cultural significance of Pete Doherty as an embodiment of the zeitgeist of modern youth. "The singer has acquired an allure that eludes others, which says much about the mood among the young," it concluded.

The newspaper was, needless to say, the *Sunday Times*.

MA Refugeee Studies

University of E. London ad, Grauniad

***DAILY MAIL* sports columnist Charlie Sale deplores bad losers – except when it comes to his own bids for glory.**

Two years ago he resigned from the Sports Journalists' Association when he failed to win a prize at their annual awards bash. Last year, when he won a gong, he was flattered enough to rejoin.

So guess what happened when he didn't win a prize last week? Yup, Sale has resigned once again.

HAVING already changed the *Daily Express* switchboard to a premium-rate 0871 number to screw money from unsuspecting readers and contributors, Richard "Dirty" Desmond has added a new hazard for anyone wishing to contact his papers.

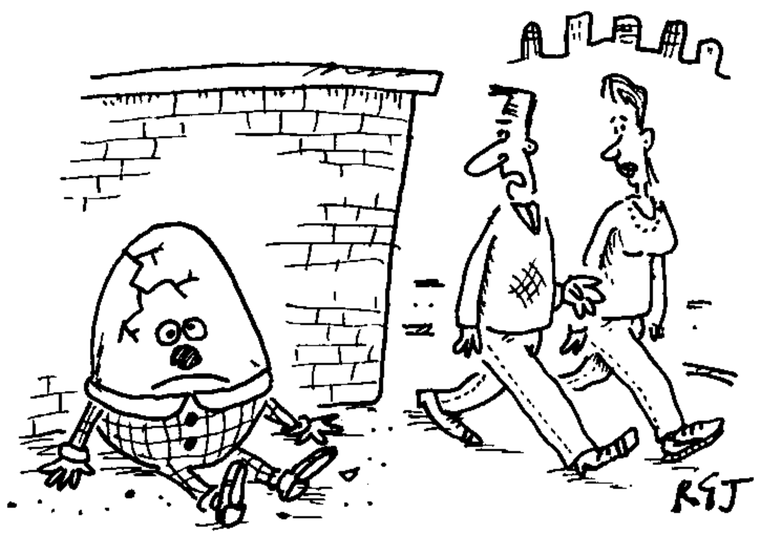
A literary gent who had been commissioned to write an *Express* book review rang the newspaper last week to ask where he should fax his piece. He was duly given the fax number for the arts and books department – only to discover, on dialling, that it had been converted to a premium-rate "fetish line" hosted by someone called Nadia.

"WHY on earth did [Michael] Jackson and the Princess of Wales both choose to open up their entire lives to this brooding, charm-free figure?" Tina Brown wonders in the *Washington Post*, in a savage attack on Martin Bashir's sycophancy towards potential interviewees.

"His fawning letters to Jackson – 'Neverland is an extraordinary, a breathtaking, a stupendous, an exhilarating and amazing place. I can't put together words to describe Neverland' – are classics of the genre."

She should know. As *Vanity Fair* editor Tina Brown-Nose penned what is universally regarded as the most obsequious letter of modern times, when she was trying to persuade Hollywood super-agent Mike Ovitz to grant her an interview. "Right now, the most hackneyed prevailing perception of you is as a packager, a term which has a connotation of crassness that has little to do with what you actually achieve on a daily basis," she wrote. "A better term for your role in the life of Hollywood would be a catalyst: activating creativity by a gifted sense of talent, material, timing and taste, plus, of course, extraordinary business acumen." She also promised to assign a hack "well disposed toward CAA", Ovitz's company.

Alas, he still declined the invitation.



"Ugh! A crackhead"

POLITICAL pundit Peter Oborne is well known as a thirsty fish who once toppled, fully clothed, into the Thames after a particularly strenuous Westminster lunch. Yet in the *Evening Standard* last week he boasted that he has given up drinking for Lent, with amazing consequences.

"My complexion, usually red and blotchy, has cleared up," he wrote. "I no longer wake up tossing and turning in the small hours, sweating alcohol and consumed by self-hatred… I belch and fart less. I am nicer. Why, then, am I counting not just the days but the hours until I can start on the booze again after Easter?"

Alas, Oborne's arithmetic isn't entirely reliable. The start of Lent, when he claims to have forsworn the bottle, was on 8 February. The following week, however, he spent several days in Southport watching the last-ever Waterloo Cup, where many witnesses saw him glugging down fine Lebanese wine in heroic quantities. And this week he's at the Cheltenham Festival, where it seems unlikely that sobriety will reign.

Only a few weeks ago, in *Observer Sport Monthly*, he wrote that he intends to spend Cheltenham week engaged in "marathon drinking sessions".

Any *Eye* readers who spot Oborne in the pubs of Cheltenham this week may wish to assist him with his calculations by pointing out that Easter isn't until 27 March.

GEORGE ADAMSON

1913-2005

We are sad to announce the death on 5 March of George Adamson, long-time *Private Eye* cartoonist and illustrator of the first five *Dear Bill* books. He was 92.

HACKWATCH

Piers Moron

"PIERS Morgan knew everyone," the *Daily Mail* announced when it serialised his book. "What none of them knew was that he was keeping a devastating secret diary."

The Insider looks like a contemporaneous diary, and in his introduction Moron cites Alan Clark's volumes as an inspiration. In fact the book has a closer kinship to the Hitler Diaries – a forgery compiled years after the event for the sole purpose of making a fast buck. Moron dashed off the book in such haste, however, that he has left behind a trail of clues which even the late Lord Dacre could hardly miss. Alas, they certainly seem to have eluded Moron and "Marina [Hyde], my best friend and unpaid but razor-sharp proof reader":

Friday 21 January 1994: Piers Morgan, currently in charge of the *Sun*'s pop column, has been summoned to Miami to meet Rupert Murdoch. "9pm: I'm in my hotel now after a long flight. It's 3am in the UK and I've just called the features production desk to make sure everything is OK with the column..." An eccentric time to check his column, surely, given that the presses have already been rolling for some hours?

Saturday 22 January 1994: Rupert has offered Piers the editorship of the *News of the World*. "At midnight I got back to the hotel. It was 5am in the UK. Too early to call anyone really..." Miraculously, overnight the time difference has shrunk from six hours to five hours. What space-time continuum is Piers in?

Saturday 12 March 1994: Piers is worrying that a *Screws* kiss'n'tell story might be a con. "Step forward Tom Crone, our legal manager, who is now married to Pierce Brosnan's ex-girlfriend. Anyone who can nick James Bond's bird has got to be a cool customer." And gifted with remarkable prescience: the current James Bond at the time is actually Timothy Dalton. Pierce Brosnan is not chosen to succeed him until later in the year, and makes his first 007 film in 1995.

Thursday 29 June 1995: Lunch at the Savoy with Piers's tycoon friend Matthew Harding, who is now a big investor in Chelsea FC. "Matthew showed me a playing card in his wallet with Glenn Hoddle's face on it. 'He's my hero: everyone should have heroes in life, shouldn't they, Piersy? I'm going to sign Glenn when I take over Chelsea. Might even pay the cash myself.'" A surprising comment, given that Glenn Hoddle is in fact already at Chelsea, and has been for the past two years.

Thursday 25 January 1996: "Went to interview Tony Blair today, after his toughest week as leader. Harriet Harman, secretary of state for social security, had revealed that she's sending her son to a selective grammar school." Quite how Harman has achieved the job of secretary of state while remaining on the opposition front bench is not explained.

Thursday 16 May 1996: To lunch with Princess Diana. "The Kensington Palace front door was opened by her beaming butler, Paul Burrell, known to everyone in Fleet Street as Diana's Rock." Actually, no one in Fleet Street has yet referred to him as Diana's rock: it isn't until January 1997 that the phrase appears in the British press.

Wednesday 26 March 1997: "Tea with Tony Blair at No 10... He was yawning a lot and drinking endless cups of tea. I tried to wake him up a bit." Blair may have been yawning, but is it possible that Piers himself was fast asleep and dreamed the whole thing? If not, he has missed a sensational story for his front page: Tony Blair has moved into 10 Downing Street already, even though John Major is still prime minister and there is more than a month to go before the general election!

Sunday 14 December 1997: "Just when Paula Yates thought her life couldn't get any worse, Hughie Green – that very irritating old bloke who used to present *Opportunity Knocks* in the '70s – has revealed he is her *father*." Green is in no fit state to reveal anything of the kind, having died of cancer earlier in the year. The revelation was made by a friend at Green's funeral and widely reported at the time – more than seven months ago.

Thursday 14 May 1998: Downing Street has given the *Sun* a ghost-written article under Bill Clinton's name which the *Mirror* had been promised exclusively. Piers is furious with Alastair Campbell and Tony Blair. "They've been in power less than a month and already stiffed us to help the *Sun*." Less than a month since May 1997, eh? How time flies!

Sunday 24 January 1999: "High excitement today when Kofi Annan, United Nations secretary general, met my man in New York, Andy Lines, at a reception. 'Aaahhh... the *Daily Mirror*, yes. Your editor is Piers Morgan, isn't he?'" A charming story, but pure fantasy. On 24 January 1999 Kofi Annan was in the middle of a week-long trip to Switzerland.

Tuesday 3 August 1999: "Went to Chequers for the first time today for tea with Blair. An extraordinary place, stuck out in the middle of the countryside... 'Do you fancy a look round the old cabinet war rooms?' he asked. And we strolled up to where Churchill made all those 'fight them on the beaches' speeches." Once again, some form of Tardis-transportation is clearly involved, since the cabinet war rooms are actually in London SW1 – as is the House of Commons, which is where Churchill made his "fight them on the beaches" speech on 4 June 1940.

Tuesday 20 February 2001: Piers is questioned about his share-dealings by DTI investigators. "It's more than a year since this investigation started," he grumbles. "But they warned it could be 'some time' before any decision is reached. Some time? How much longer do they need for God's sake?" A good question, especially when one then reaches Tuesday 26 February 2002, which has exactly the same entry repeated verbatim – even down to the claim that "it's now more than a year since this investigation started".

Tuesday 29 January 2002: Dinner with Geoff Hoon at the House of Commons. "I told him my brother [an army officer] said the army boys had a new nickname for him – 'Buff'. 'Why "Buff?" he said, looking bemused. 'Buff-Hoon,' I replied. He was not amused." Perhaps because he'd heard it before. The surprise is that Piers hadn't, since as long ago as 18 January 2000 his own *Daily Mirror* noted that Buff was the "nickname used by Westminster wags" for the defence secretary, and in the two years since then *Mirror* political pundit Paul Routledge has repeated the joke every time he writes about Hoon.

Friday 7 May 2004: Moron is under attack for running faked photos of British squaddies abusing Iraqis. "I was cheered by an email from Jeremy Bowen saying, 'Keep it going, Piers, you're doing some great journalism.' And the ironic thing is that we are... But people are still obsessing about the veracity of these pictures."

Obsessing about veracity! Something that Moron himself has seldom been troubled by, as his fantastical faked diaries show.

Still, not everything in the book is wrong. Here's Piers's self-portrait in June 1995: "I emerge as a complete and utter hypocritical berk."

MORE MORON

EX-*Times* editor Charlie "Gorbals" Wilson had some interesting insights into Piers Moron's career in his review of *The Insider* in last Friday's *Independent*.

"In his early years in charge of the *Mirror*, Morgan was to a huge extent protected against the Peter Pan factor by his management board, which included three former Fleet Street editors whom he listened to and respected," Wilson mused. "They formed a grey-haired sounding board that absorbed his more extreme boyish tendencies. In later years there was no editorial brain on the board and no journalist in the company whose talents came within reach of his."

Naturally it is only modesty which prevents Wilson from pointing out that one of these three wise men alongside Kelvin Mackenzie and David Montgomery was, er, himself. The high point of his period as Piers' boss and managing director at Mirror Group Newspapers was of course the brilliant job he did of "absorbing" the notorious "ACHTUNG! SURRENDER" front page in 1996.

THE *Guardian* gave a helpful push to Piers "Morgan" Moron's self-promotion campaign with a 5,000-word cover story in its Saturday magazine. Yet Simon Hattenstone's interview with Moron was curiously coy about certain aspects of his life.

Hattenstone noted that Moron has a small scar on his face, dating from when Jeremy Clarkson punched him at an awards ceremony. But why did Clarkson lash out? As *Eye* readers will recall, Moron kept printing stories insinuating that he was committing the grave sin of adultery. Clarkson was incensed at this hypocrisy, knowing that Moron (a married man) was himself having an affair with a female hack (also married) from another newspaper.

Despite having five pages at his disposal, all Hattenstone could say about this was that "when his marriage was breaking up, *Private Eye* detailed the extra-marital comings and goings of 'Piers Moron'." Might this reticence have anything to do with the fact that Moron's partner in the extra-marital comings and goings was and is Marina Hyde, diary editor of the *Grauniad*?

PS: Further proof that Piers Moron is now regarded by the *Guardian* as "one of the family" comes with the announcement this week that he'll be joining Alan Rusbridger to judge the "student newspaper of the year", the biggest prize in the paper's student media awards.

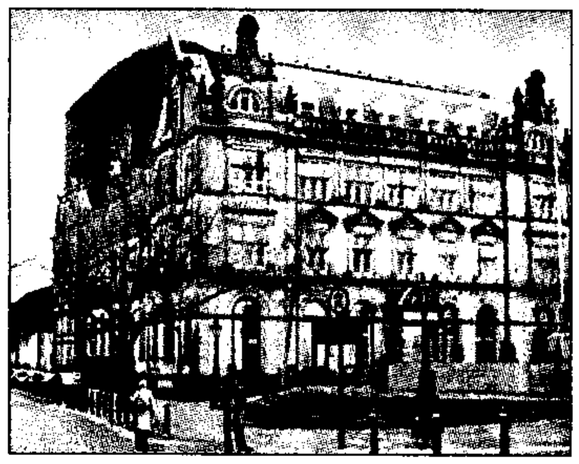
The judges will be looking for "originality, quality, diversity and for a paper that isn't afraid to take risks". Lord Gnome has a helpful tip for any aspirants wishing to prove their risk-taking boldness, especially as the deadline isn't until July. Why not include in your entry an article praising the *Grauniad* for deciding that an editor who was sacked in disgrace less than a year ago is just the man to adjudicate on journalistic excellence?

"You wanted me to dress up as a schoolgirl"

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE former main post office in Preston *(see illustration)* **is a handsome, vaguely Classical building dating from 1903. Standing next to the war memorial in the Market Place designed by Sir Giles Scott, it faces Preston's glory, the Harris Art Gallery & Museum – one of the finest public buildings in the north of England. Yet now it is to suffer a fate worse than demolition.**

Along with the fish market buildings behind, the old post office is to be converted by Preston city and Lancashire county councils into a £25m library and "knowledge centre". This means gutting it and slapping a huge and hideous glass superstructure on top, designed by Gaunt Francis, architects in Cardiff who specialise in refurbishing offices.



Though the old post office (listed grade II) made a perfectly good main post office, perhaps there is some merit in the general idea. Taking the existing city library out of the Harris Museum will free more space for exhibitions and displays in Hibbert's astonishing 1880s Neo-Classical pile – at least, that's the promise. The suspicion is that the scheme is just part of the unnecessary regeneration of the Market Place for the benefit of big business.

Not far behind the old post office is Preston Bus Station, an ambitious and remarkable concrete structure of the late 1960s. It has many admirers as well as detractors; and the council wants to demolish it to make way for a shopping centre by Grosvenor Estates.

But the main objection to the new library is that it is crass and ugly. Yet again the rigorously educated, modern architectural profession can only think in terms of building glass walls when faced with adapting or enlarging an historic building. The naïve "futuristic project" by Gaunt Francis bears no formal relationship to the stone walls and gables of the post office below: the only concession to the site being to bend its roof down to a lower level towards the Harris Museum. This "environmentally-friendly glass building", insists the county council, "will relate to the surrounding cityscape." To judge by the architects' artistic "impression", it will only spoil Preston city centre.

MORE on Sir Stuart Lipton, chairman of Stanhope plc, property developers, who was also chairman of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) until an independent audit highlighted a possible conflict of interest with regard to eight of the 15 commissioners (Eyes passim).

A select committee of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has now reviewed CABE's role and concludes in its report that CABE's "credibility as a public agency is… at stake because of a lack of transparency in its operation and potential conflicts of interest among the commissioners and the design review panel. The value of its advice is in danger of being undermined." Well, quite.

Readers will recall the sensational evidence given to the committee by Cllr Adrian Dennis about the ambiguous roles of CABE and Stanhope regarding the Croydon Gateway development (Eye 1120). Sir Stuart was not amused by Mr Dennis's intervention and has taken the criticism personally, setting his lawyers on to him.

As Mr Dennis is a qualified town planner, Linklaters has complained to the Royal Town Planning Institute (of which he is a member) about his behaviour. But Mr Dennis points out that his evidence to the parliamentary committee was made as an elected Croydon councillor and had nothing to do with the RTPI whatever. He also notes that his evidence was "protected by parliamentary privilege so the RTPI are forbidden to interfere even if it affected them (which it does not), and they may be in contempt of the House for interfering with a witness."

Mr Dennis's observations about what was going on in Croydon were in the public interest. But not content with hounding him via the RTPI for performing his duty as a councillor, Lipton's lawyers have written to others connected professionally with him – including his employer, the borough of Southwark. Why?

MEANWHILE what of the quango to which Sir Stuart once added such lustre? The latest *Blueprint* magazine reports that CABE's commissioning of MoreySmith Ltd, architects and interior designers, to make its new office inside Colonel Seifert's old Space House in Kingsway has not been straightforward.

First, the 80 CABE staff lobbied for a space to store and heat up Pot Noodles, on which they subsist; and then the new chief executive, Richard Simmons, insisted on the provision of an east-facing prayer room even though neither he nor any of his staff are planning to use it. And then the new chairman, John Sorrell – the designer who gave us the ethnic tailfins on British Airways planes – asked: "Where will Tony sit when he comes to visit?"

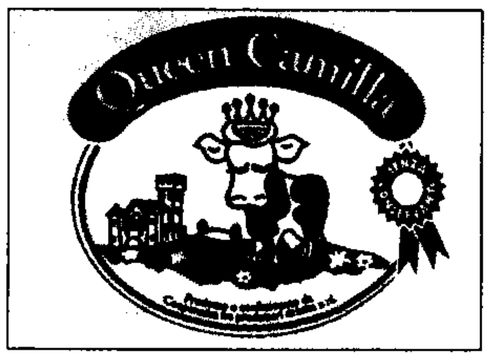
A prime ministerial reception area had to be provided, even though the notion of Blair ever taking any intelligent interest in architecture, whether new or old, is absurd. All of which puts into perspective the carping at My Lord St John of Stevas a decade ago for acquiring grand premises in St James's Square for the late, lamented Royal Fine Art Commission and its modest staff of eight.

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

It's crazy! Two retrospectives and a film season about Robert Crumb.
Cartoons aren't Art!
Art isn't funny– not intentionally, anyway.
HOXTON SQUARE
Er...



I-SPY

Italian cheese

Submitted by Jonathan Keates (address please!).

£10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

THE season of job announcements continues with news that Kathryn McDowell will succeed Clive Gillinson as managing director of the LSO – an appointment that at least has some reason to it.

A sharp, bright Northern Irelander with an exemplary record in the make-do-and-mend culture of arts admin, McDowell has a reputation for accepting no nonsense: all of which might be thought to bode well. Alas, a lack of nonsense isn't necessarily what's called for in leading a great orchestra.

Gillinson's success over the past 21 years has to a large extent been based on dreaming dreams that no-nonsense candidates would have dismissed as unrealistic. Which is what makes him a hard act to follow, and harder still because his dreams involve a good deal of unfinished business McDowell will have to sort out pretty smartly.

Chief among them is the fact that the costs of converting the redundant St Luke's Church in Clerkenwell into a home for the orchestra have, as previously reported, eaten a massive hole in the LSO's finances. And it shows no sign of diminishing. As he prepares to leave for *his* new job in America, Gillinson has been making brave predictions that the debts will be sorted out by the time McDowell takes over in July. But hardly anybody agrees.

Musicians in the orchestra are worried for their futures. And a note of growing desperation is detectable in the orchestra's new fund-raising initiatives – the latest and most desperate being the launch of LSO ringtones for mobile phones, enabling supporters to annoy their fellow-passengers on trains and buses with the theme from *Star Wars* or Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*.

Unfortunately ringtones may not be the answer Gillinson so badly needs. Boosey & Hawkes has recently gone public with a ringtone featuring great moments from the work of one of its composers, James MacMillan. You can have it free, together with MacMillan's photo on your phone screen. But alas, there hasn't yet been a stampede. "Er, well, into double figures," says a company insider, adding quietly that "a fair proportion" are MacMillan's family and employees.

Meanwhile Gillinson is taking his departure as a licence to rail against the Arts Council: a diversionary tactic to blame it for the mess the LSO is in. The other week, at the annual gathering of the Association of British Orchestras, he launched a fierce public attack on the council's failure to support orchestral excellence in Britain, drawing predictable applause. But since then many of those present have distanced themselves from what was, on reflection, an unjustified rant.

The current issue of *Classical Music* magazine carries a letter from the MD of the Philharmonia Orchestra giving "credit" to the council for its support. And the same page carries a polite response from the council itself, pointing out that in the past five years it has awarded the LSO a 46 percent increase in revenue funding with additional lump sums of £450,000 towards the purchase of instruments and £3.6m toward the costs of St Luke's. In other words, it has been bailing out his dreams quite handsomely.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

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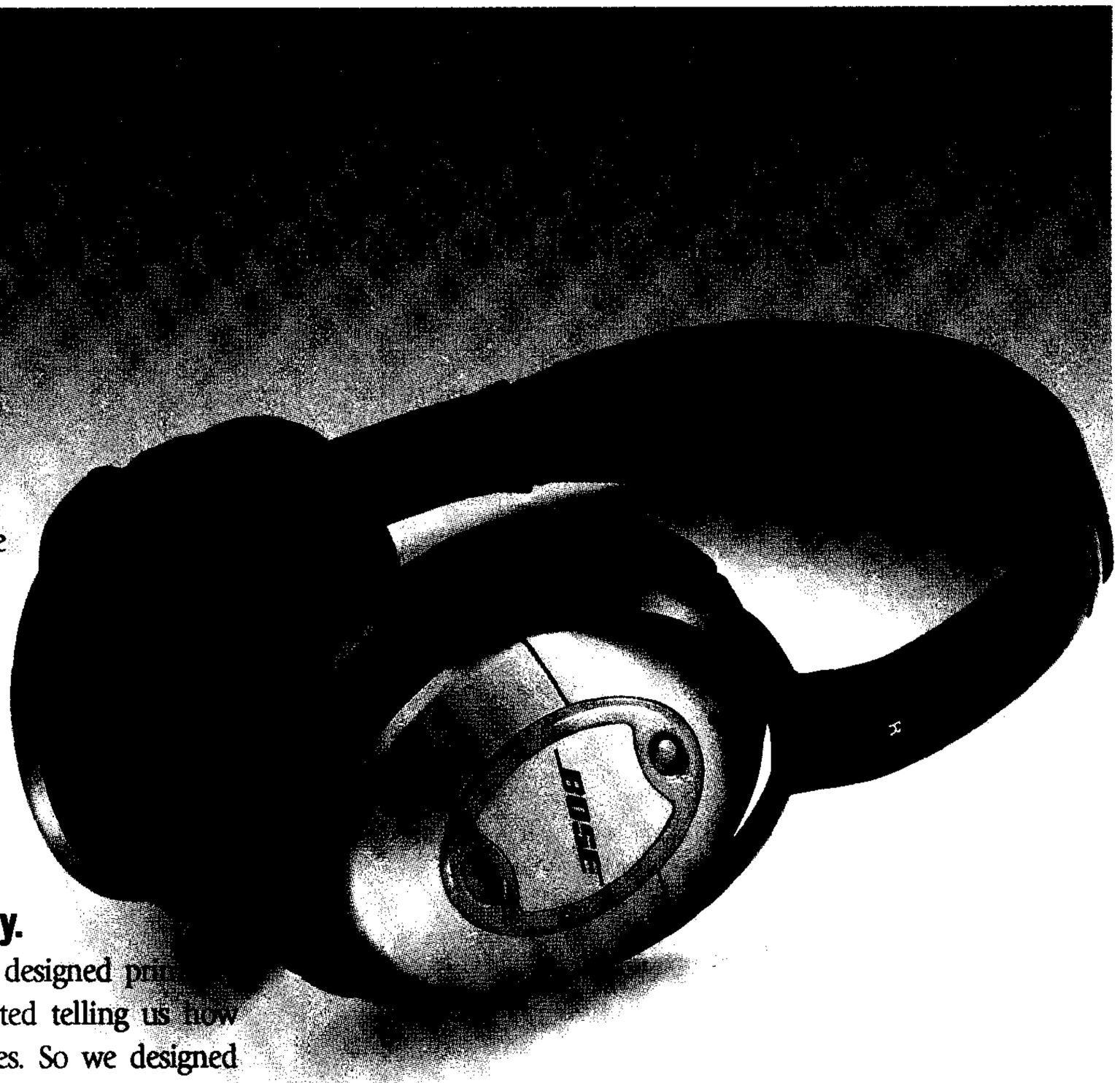

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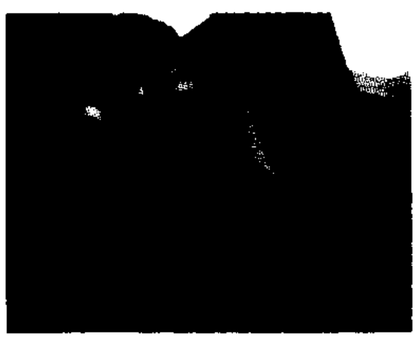

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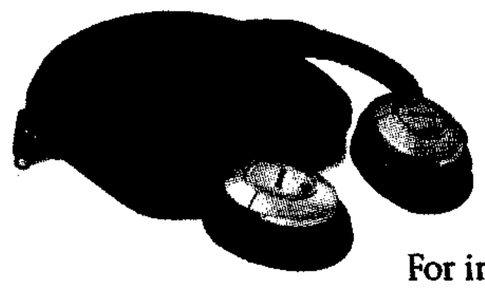

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Literary Review

Publish and be damned boring

Publisher
Tom Maschler
(Picador, £20)

QUITE the most entertaining part of Tom Maschler's account of his career in publishing is the photographic section. Or rather sections, as there are two of them, which seems rather a lot for a work of under 300 pages.

I counted 54 individual pictures, in 32 of which the author can be found beaming up from the frame: stylishly torching cigarettes for John Lennon and Kingsley Amis at a Cape party, hanging attentively on the words of Gabriel ("Gabo") Garcia Marquez or asking Mohammed Ali for his autograph. A grand old life it was to be sure, lived out in an office marked down as "such a stimulating place that the days were never long enough".

Younger readers may not perhaps be aware of the pivotal role played by Mr Maschler here in post-war British publishing. For somewhere near three decades he presided over the affairs of Jonathan Cape, described without the least vainglory as "the greatest literary publishing house in England". Anyone who was anyone got published by Cape circa 1960-90: both the Amises, Barnes, Brookner, and any number of overseas heavyweights from Styron and Roth to Heller and Vonnegut.

Sashaying into the trade in the era of the gentleman publisher and shuffling out of it at the moment the American conglomerates moved in (a process he assisted by selling his firm to Random House), Maschler's précis of his years in the biz ought to be one of the sneakiest pieces of *affaire* bookworld reportage ever produced.

What we get, alas, is a series of plodding little vignettes – only one section of the book clocks in at more than 15 pages – in which Tom cosies up to the boys and girls who made it all possible. Notwithstanding his early disappointment, the reader still turns the pages with a certain amount of anticipation. This man published Salman Rushdie; he was John Fowles's guide and mentor and Roald Dahl's fast friend. What will he, their editor and sponsor, have to say about them, eh? Sadly, GCSE candidates searching for a crib will have to look elsewhere.

Anita Brookner, we learn, "is a very fine writer." Edna O'Brien, on the other hand, "was a wonderful fresh voice in our literature, well read, funny and pretty too." Bernard Levin's journalism? "Whether in agreement or not, one had to admire the manner in which he presented a case."

Did one? Well I never! So that's how editorial judgement got dispensed from behind the big book-strewn desk in Bedford Square! Ah well, the reader consoles himself, surely the absence of anything interesting about a) the publishing industry and b) the work of the people who sustain it will be compensated for by some high-class gossip.

Having trawled hopefully, yet with increasing exasperation, through *Publisher*'s 44 chapters, I can report that Kingsley Amis liked a drop, that Julian Barnes, having cooked his editorial chum a celebratory meal, was so overcome by exhaustion he fell asleep, and that Ian McEwan, invited to supper with his first wife, arrived alone having had a row with her *en route*. McEwan, you may be interested to know, "has written nine novels", of which "the most admired and successful was *Atonement*".

And thus it goes on. As portentous preamble ("I will now write of three books in a category of their own, each of which became a household name") gives way to celebrity coat-trailing (sending a fax to Rushdie on Booker night 1995 with fellow-Indonesian yacht-trip passenger Mick Jagger), the reader begins to divine the nature of *Publisher*'s fatal flaw. It is, quite simply – and amazingly, given the triumphs of his professional life – that Maschler has no idea what might interest his audience and what might not.

Reposing in the latter out-tray are the seven-page letter that Roald Dahl sent him in 1988 when he was on a depression-induced sabbatical and the new management had started interfering and the mantra taught him by Allen Ginsberg (UM, UM SA RA WAH, BUDDHA, DA KEEN E EYE, BEN ZA, WAN NIYE, BEN ZA, BE RO, ZA NI YE UM, UM UM, PEY, PEY, PEY SO HA). Oh, and there's this pregnant paragraph, which concludes a two-page resumé of Maschler's marriage, celebrated on the day after the great storm of 1987:

"The morning after our wedding we had a very early breakfast. Having chosen Venice for our honeymoon, we decided to allow extra time lest we encountered obstacles on the way to the airport." No, I am not making this up. Earlier in the piece Maschler reveals that he and his bride to be returned from Paris with some pigeons in the back of their car. There were twenty-eight of them.

Books & Bookmen

■ THE Scottish Book Trust's list of the 100 best Scottish books of all time has gone down badly north of the border because of its bizarre criteria for inclusion.

Compiled largely by Professor Willy Maley of Glasgow University, the list seems to regard books by Sassenach authors such as *1984* by George Orwell (written on Jura), *The Life of Pi* by Yann Martel (published by Edinburgh's Canongate), *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf and *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, a Pole, as great Scottish books. All this while missing out on proper Scots like George Macdonald Fraser, Gavin Maxwell, Jenny Colgan and Emma Tennant.

Moreover the list includes a number of younger writers who haven't really been writing long enough to have much of a claim on greatness. In the hot 100 or the "bubbling under" list of the next best 100 can be found the likes of Zoe Strachan, whose last book *Spin Cycle* was described by *Scotland on Sunday* as "the sort of stuff you might have had confiscated by your classroom teacher at the age of 14"; Louise Welsh; Alan Bissett; Anne Donovan; Sophie Cooke and Laura Marney. All made their debut in the last four years, and Marney's first book came only last July. So, how have they managed to make the lists?

The fact that all were pupils of Maley's on the M Litt Creative Writing course at Glasgow (indeed Welsh, Strachan, Bissett and Marney are now tutors) is obviously a coincidence. As is the inclusion of two titles from the 11/9 imprint, which published only 16 books before folding. Not a bad strike rate – and its inclusion is obviously unaided by the fact that Willy Maley was on the 11/9 board.

'Bookworm'

HOW BOOK-REVIEWING WORKS

"John Gray's *Heresies* came as yet further evidence that we have a truly original, alarming and penetrating essayist in our midst... This book will still be a book of the year in 2104." — Bryan Appleyard chooses his book of the year, *Sunday Times*, 28 November 2004.

"Invigoratingly sceptical... endlessly fascinating... a profound meditation on what it means to be human." — John Gray reviews Bryan Appleyard's *Aliens*, 7 March 2005.

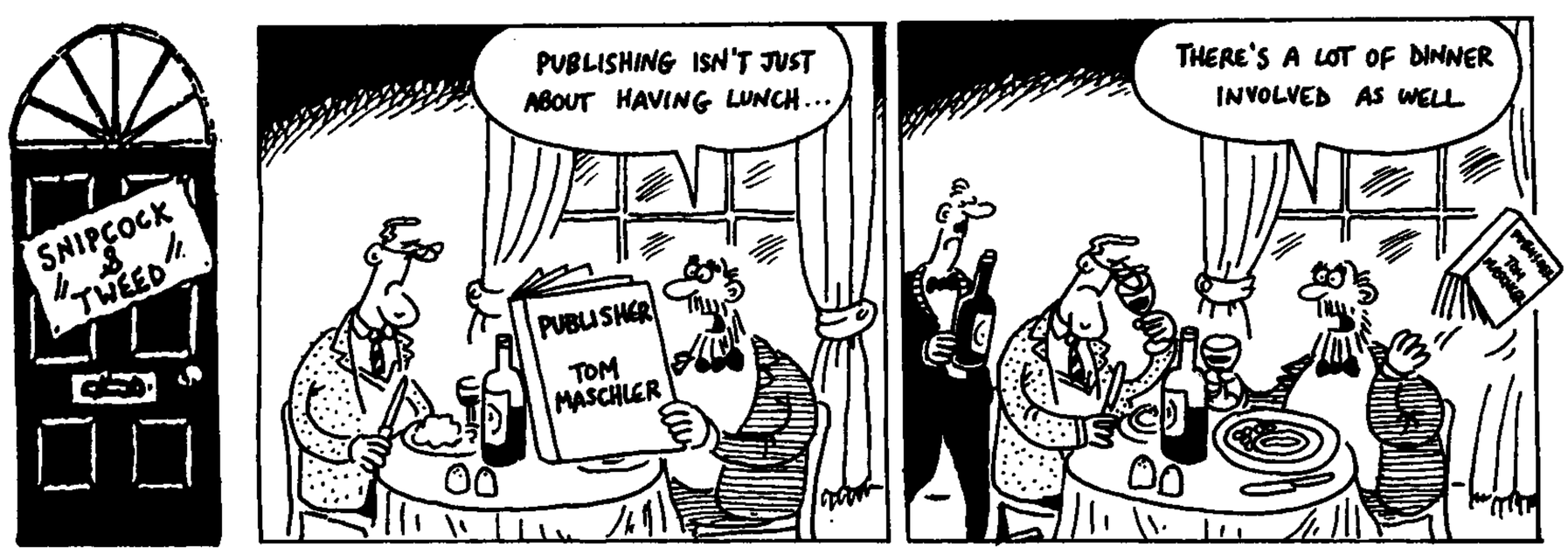
LIBRARY NEWS

■ CITY bosses in Liverpool have made a terrific start in their role as "cultural pathfinders" for the nation.

The role was announced by culture minister Richard Caborn in February, and is supposed to see the city helping other local authorities "nurture creativity and culture in a dynamic way".

Instead, the annual council budget meeting this month saw Liverpool shave more than £800,000 from its libraries' budget – including £585,000 to be saved through "rationalising opening hours" at Liverpool Central Library. Evening closures will particularly hit homework clubs for teenagers and other groups which use the meeting rooms. Funds for new purchases of "resources" (books, presumably?) have also been cut.

Meanwhile Liverpool is pouring money into its preparations to be European Capital of Culture in 2008. After all, what have libraries got to do with culture, anyway?



Element-ary

Sir,

Whether Audi's ad folks flunked their physics is quite irrelevant: they certainly flunked their chemistry. "Element 120" will in the first instance be known as Unbinilium, will have the symbol "Ubn" and will occupy a different position in the periodic table. As to the relative stability of elements 114 to 118, I suspect it'll all be relative. Is a half-life measured in nanoseconds really more stable than one measured in picoseconds?

I remain, sir, your obedient servant,
MARTIN BELLWOOD,

Chemistry, University of Surrey.

Shameless plug

Sir,

In your last Letters, Russell Valance ("History Lesson") noted alarming similarities between 5th century Athens' adventures in Sicily and our own in Iraq.

By amazing coincidence this parallel just happens to be the subject of a play of mine, "The Sicilian Expedition", due to be broadcast on Radio 3. Listeners can decide for themselves whether Tony Blair or George Bush best inherit the mantle of superbrat extraordinaire Alcibiades.

Yours sincerely,
JOHN FLETCHER,

Shepton Mallet, Somerset.

This form is not valid unless you sigh here – please also supply your date of birth.

Proxy Voting Form
The Loughborough Building Society AGM

Lookalike

Blair

St Hubbins

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the uncanny resemblance between Spinal Tap's David St Hubbins and Britain's very own front man and lead guitarist Tony Blair?

Other similarities abound. For example, St Hubbins was mystified upon hearing the jeers directed at his band by the audience, before putting it down to the act they followed: "People were still booing him when we were on stage".

Blair counters nearly all criticism with the Tap-esque refrain that New Labour is receiving the taunts aimed at the previous administration and the mess they left behind (the "Pretty Straight Guys" aren't to blame for anything).

Has Blair modelled his spin and mendacity on Spinal Tap's amps? They both "go to eleven".

T. CHAHBOUNE,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"She may have her knockers but punters think Jordan will come out on top."
WARREN LUSH (Ladbroke's), AOL
(K.J.D. Burns)

"'Que sera sera' they chanted in English."
HENRY WINTER, Daily Telegraph
(Paul Jackson)

"There are rumours that Caravaggio had a corpse dug up as a model for this picture of the dead Lazarus to make it as lifelike as possible."
TIM MARLOW, Channel 5
(Valerie Grosvenor Myer)

"Sunderland are breathing down the shorts of Wigan."
MARK BRIGHT, Radio 5 Live
(Andrew Black)

"It's Oliver Kahn's turn to taste the ball in the back of the goal."
ANDY TOWNSEND, ITV1
(C. Skelton)

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"Pactiv: Advanced Packaging Solutions" – *cardboard boxes*

"A comprehensive lifestyle solution" – *a new house, from estate agent's advert*

"Your Security Solution" – *password for phone banking*

"Japanese Knotweed Solutions" – *weedkiller*

"Providing Candidate/Role Synergy Solutions" – *recruitment agency*

"SRD Group: Intrinsic Solution Facilitation Services" – *management consultants*

"NMR: Affordable HD Editing and Effects Solutions from Soho's Leading Solutions Experts" – *film editing*

All submitted by readers

Library, fine

Sir,

I was struck by the resemblance between the Library News story in the Eye 1125 and the new Central Library project in Cardiff. There are some obvious differences however so I wonder if they are in any way related?

The new Central Library has always been part of the proposals for the St David's 2 re-development and the council has only reluctantly, and at a late stage, agreed to changes which preserve the timing of the whole development. This will mean housing the library in temporary accommodation for a period until the new library is completed. The developer is paying for the new library building (circa £12m), will find the temporary accommodation in the City Centre, fund the moves and temporary arrangements and will contribute £500,000 towards the fit out of the new library. The retail elements will not be allowed to open until the new library is occupied and operational. There is no question of a "clear out" of the library nor will its replacement be "largely at public expense" – quite the contrary.

The ice rink which was originally built by and is still operated by the private sector will be accommodated in temporary accommodation until permanent facilities are available within the Cardiff International Sports Village.

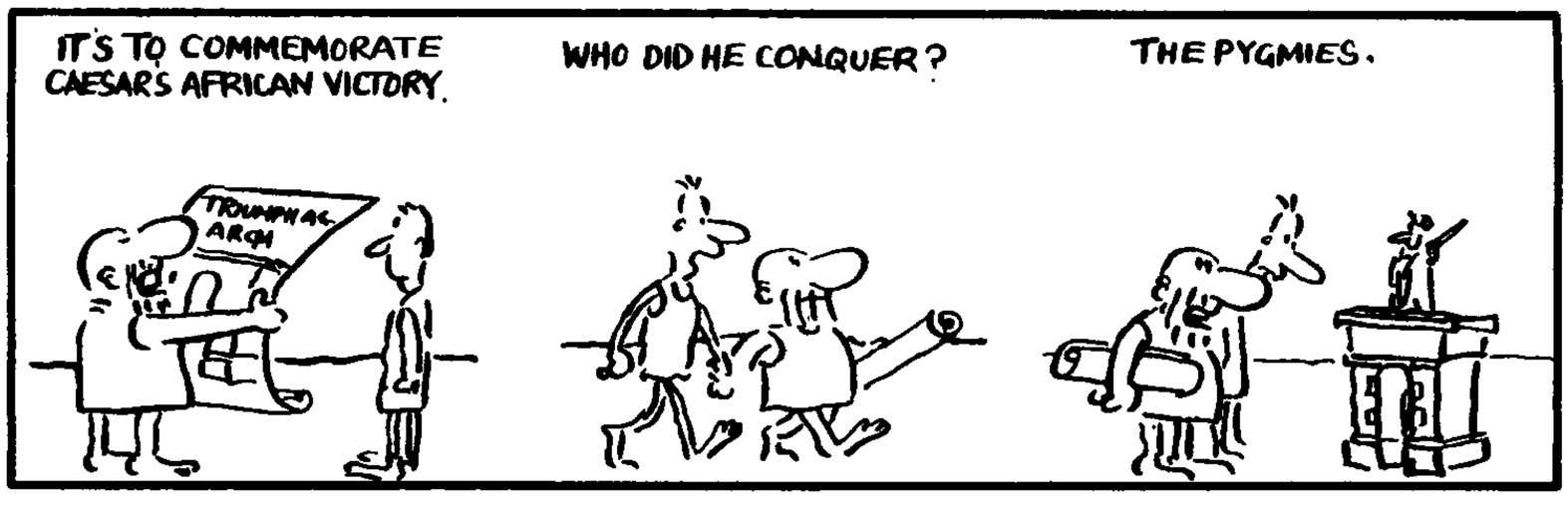
In the interests of maintaining your esteemed organ in rude health, I thought a little more truth should be injected into the article.

Yours sincerely,
CLLR. BILL KELLOWAY,

Executive Member, Education & Lifelong learning.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN



Latin scholar

Sir,

Lingua Latina – Corringenda.

Any fule obviously does not kno (Letters, 1127) that "pp" is the accepted abbreviation for "per procurationem" (Oxford Dictionary of Abbreviations; Collins Latin Dictionary and Grammar), hence the lesser abbreviated form of "per pro". The translation is "by delegation to" or "through the agency of" and thus the initials should precede the delegatee, E. Strobes, and not Lord Gnome, as your first correspondent rightly pointed out.

Yours faithfully,
WALFORD TAYLOR,

Farnham.

DIARY

CHRISTINE HAMILTON

Looking back, I wonder how I could have been so very, very stupid!

But aged 18, clad in nothing but rather brief navy shorts and a stretch candy-striped towelling top, I was ripe for the picking!

And pick me he jolly well did! And then swallowed me whole! All down in one!

Not that I'm complaining!

You see, he was utterly gorgeous! And I've always taken a fancy to a man with a healthy appetite!

His name? To ensure his privacy, let's just call him C.S. Because his second name was Smith. And his first name? Cyril. Cyril Smith. At that time, he was widely tipped as a future Liberal Prime Minister. To me, he was 100% all man with a girth to match!

He was 26 stone, and every inch a man! I was tanned and toned, and immensely flattered by his attentions!

My fuller-figured lothario invited me for dinner at a hotel in Poole. I wore a sexy white dress with a plunging neckline that left little to the imagination!

Cyril paid me endless compliments over his first course of two steak-and-kidney puddings with mash plus extra sausages. He muttered "lovely grub" over and over again before concluding, "tasty, tasty, very very tasty".

And I could tell he was enjoying himself by the way he kept licking his lips and asking the waiter for more!

As Cyril tucked into his backside of lamb in suet, I giggled that the champagne bubbles were going right up my nose and I supposed I'd have to take off my top and fan myself to stop them bubbling quite so much!

But Cyril didn't appear to hear – he was concentrating on his food!

While Cyril lingered over his double blancmange with extra custard, the waiter approached him quietly. "Yes, sir," he said, "We do have a room available." Needless to say, I gulped!

Yes, I gulped! I was still very much a virgin – but how could I trust myself when faced with the gorgeous Cyril! What was I letting myself in for?

After lunch – and feeling a mite woozy! – Cyril led me to the room he had booked specially.

"Let's get stuck in, lass!" he sighed, as the door closed gently behind us. There, set out on a table in the middle, was a five-tier Black Forest Gateau with two silver dessert spoons!

"Oh, Cyril!" I swooned, "I think I'm going to be sick!" And with that, I rushed heaving from the chamber!

Oh, the agony and the ecstasy of it all! We never mentioned that episode again. But on cool, dark nights, so many miles apart, I know we both recall that memorable meal...and think of the things that might have been.

Oh for those carefree days of wine and roses! All that London could offer was opening up, and I was blossoming.

I was footloose and fancy-free – and he was the young Andrew Neil, soon to make a name for himself as the former editor of a Sunday newspaper!

These days, of course, he is known as Brillo Pad – but back then he preferred to go under another name.

"Christine, my dearest, let's not be so formal," he purred in his gentle Scots brogue, as his hirsute arm plunged abrasively round my waist, "Please just call me... Pad."

After a jolly evening in my flat, Pad and I found ourselves alone. I am not sure how it happened – but there was only one room and my bed was the obvious place to relax and enjoy another glass of wine – or two!

That magical night, politics made Pad come alive with passion! It was the early 1970s – and we were both mustard-keen members of the Young Conservatives. We spoke way into the night about the things that really mattered to us – whether Anthony Barber would draft an effective Prices and Incomes policy, and who was most likely to take Graham Knightley's place as Junior Transport Minister if Graham was promoted to take Keith Rogers' place in the Welsh office if and when Keith was moved sideways to Social Security.

As dawn rose to greet another day, Pad was still hard at it, arguing six times in one night for wholesale constitutional reform. Nor was I the first woman he had debated with. What would Mummy have said? She would have told us to run along and get an early night, and that's for sure! We both knew we shouldn't have done it – but the temptation proved irresistible!

I had to put Pad and Cyril behind me, and move on. The moment I set eyes on my future husband, Neil Hamilton, my instincts told me that, yes, here was our future Prime Minister!

There was just something about him! Perhaps it was the way he swooped on the cigarettes in the box in the centre of the table at corporate functions and plunged them headlong into his poacher's-pocket with such a clear sense of purpose! Or was it that delicious little sideways-smile of his, at once so vulnerable yet so determined – a smile which seemed to say, "I'm a little lamb that's lost my way. So what's in it for me?"

Well, Neil may not be Prime Minister – yet! But he's Mother Goose at Basingstoke this year, and that can't be bad!

Talk about National Treasures! Between the two of us, we've starred in Babes in the Wood at Swindon, we've posed in the all-together (!) on the cover of Nuts magazine, we've appeared with our chums Majors Ingram and Hewitt dancing the Hornpipe in fish-net tights on Channel 4's prestigious 100 Greatest Plonkers, and, just recently, my BTM has enjoyed a thorough spring-clean on Celebrity Colonic Irrigation!

Not bad going for an A-list celebrity couple they once had the sheer bloody nerve to call pushy! If truth be told, there's not a soul in this world less pushy than our own good selves – and that's something I'll certainly be telling Charles and Camilla, once our request for an invitation to their nuptials has finally born fruit (HINT! HINT!).

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

WHAT AN EXPERIENCE THAT WAS, GOING TO THE PALACE THE OTHER WEEK!
I MEAN, THERE I WAS, WITH THE LIKES OF ERIC CLAPTON NO LESS, SURROUNDED BY ALL THIS HISTORY AND TRADITION, BEING INTRODUCED TO HER MAJESTY, THE QUEEN...
IT WAS VERY HUMBLING, BARRY.
SHE DIDN'T HAVE THE FOGGIEST WHO EITHER OF US WERE. I WAS CRESTFALLEN.
I BLAME YOUR P.R., MATE

TV

The Government Inspector (Channel 4)

THE hack pack is always hoping for things that might bring Tony Blair down and there had been much speculation that Channel 4's dramatisation of the Dr David Kelly case might be the end of the premier. There was even briefly a rumour at Westminster that Tony might call an early election which, under broadcasting law, would have forced C4 to delay transmission.

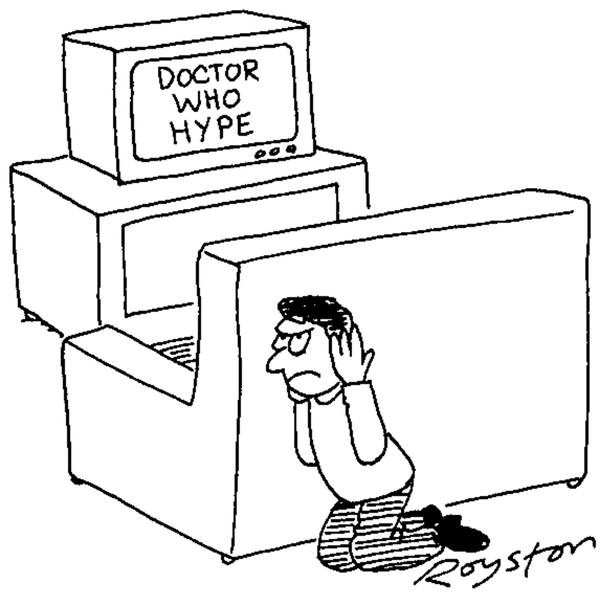
In fact, Downing Street may now wish the film were going out rather closer to polling day. It's true that Peter Kosminsky's film shows Blair as a wally who likes playing his guitar and is bullied by Alastair Campbell; but Rory Bremner's been doing that stuff since before the last election.

But generally, and against expectation, Kosminsky blames it all on the media. Andrew Gilligan is presented as a slippery toe-rag who falsified his notes of a meeting with Kelly. And another hack – Nick Rufford of the *Sunday Times* – is portrayed as a slimy type who kippered up Kelly by putting the scientist's name to an off-the-record quote.

Few readers of the Hutton report will have thought that it would be possible to be harder on the media and softer on the government than Lord Brian was… but somehow Kosminsky has managed it. The writer-director's defence presumably would be that his remit was different.

In interviews Kosminsky has been keen to stress that he doesn't want the piece to be labelled "drama-documentary". **The Government Inspector**, he insists, is a "drama". What this means is that he is claiming the protection of a genre which allows far more licence to writers. And he certainly takes it. For example, there are two scenes that caused audible gasps at the press screening. In one, "Andrew Gilligan", taking shifty sips from a mug of tea, reaches for his Sharp electronic diary and rewrites the notes of his hotel meeting with "David Kelly".

In the other, Kelly, shortly before his death, has a long and emotionally devastating conversation in London with a former Iraqi scientist he met during an earlier tour of duty as an inspector. The assembled hacks, who had a generally low opinion of Lord Hutton's investigative capabilities, assumed that the television director had outflanked the old Ulster judge and



found new information. But, at the press conference after the screening, it transpired that, whatever your views of Hutton, he was at least working to a somewhat more acceptable standard of proof than seems required for a drama-documentary, sorry, "drama."

The pre-death chat with the Iraqi scientist turned out to be an imagined scene involving a composite character. And the allegation of sharp practice with the Sharp organiser (which Gilligan violently denies) was based on showing "ghost" images from the screen of Gilligan's machine (obtained by the Hutton inquiry and posted on its web site) to an "expert" who concluded that the reporter had over-written his notes in the way shown.

These two moments show the fundamental problem with drama-documentary, which is what most of the audience will take *The Government Inspector* to be, no matter how carefully Kosminsky tries to reclassify his piece.

In a straight documentary, it would be perfectly acceptable to show the "ghost" images from the Sharp on screen and have an expert suggesting that tampering had taken place. It would be equally reasonable in such a film to have a friend or colleague giving the opinion that Dr Kelly had been unsettled by the possibility that he was wrong about his assessment of whether weapons of mass destruction remained in Iraq.

But, once you dramatise this action and that encounter as happening, you give it the stamp of reality. That's why drama-documentaries need to proceed with extraordinary care. But strangely this piece, which needs to be the most scrupulous of Kosminsky's films, is actually the most cavalier with the facts.

It's an odd decision; but it's explained by the temperament of the director. Kosminsky in the past has been a loner, taking on subjects – such as the John Stalker case or UN peace-keepers in Kosovo – in which the majority of the media had little interest. Finding himself on a subject where the pack has been hunting for years, he was determined to find a fresh line. He has: but you don't have to be Lord Hutton to wonder if the dramatisation of a tragedy caused by questionable assertions should contain questionable assertions.

It also feels shoddy that a project that's so tough on Gilligan, Campbell and Rufford, among others, should be so tentative on the subject of Kelly himself. Rylance plays a tortured saint; but Kosminsky completely ignores the very strong suggestion that Kelly's state of mind may have been affected by a close friendship with a female colleague.

Okay, this might be dismissed as mere gossip but, in a movie that admits other elements of speculation, this decision feels like timidity and means that Kelly's psychological crisis is presented as entirely professional which, studies of suicide suggest, is rarely the case.

'Remote Controller'

MEDIA NEWS

ITV boss Charles Allen has squeezed another huge concession out of Ofcom.

Having already convinced the broadcasting regulator to allow ITV to abandon regional programming, Allen has been reassured by Ofcom chief executive Stephen Carter that current rules governing "product placement" are "too restrictive".

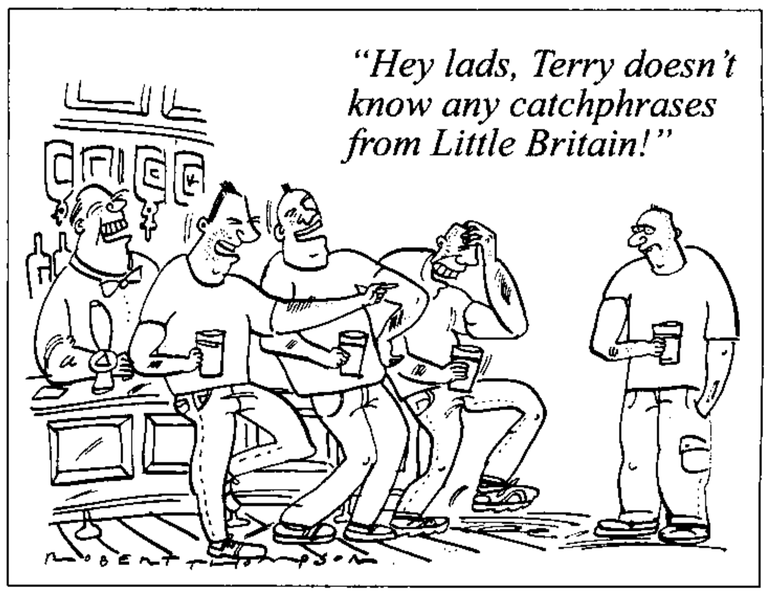
This will allow blatant plugs for products to be shoved into ITV programmes, much to the delight of advertisers – and to shareholders who are already celebrating a 58 percent rise in profits.

But while Carter is happy to watch Allen erode ITV's commitment to public service broadcasting, viewers are less impressed. ITV's plunge downmarket has cost the channel 23 percent of its younger viewers year on year and 12 percent of all ABC 1s.

LORD BIRT's "blue sky thinking" on broadcasting policy has so far been ignored by culture secretary Tessa Jowell, much to the relief of BBC bosses.

But he is now set to "reassert" his "authority" over policy in a McTaggart lecture in which he will again raise the issue of "top-slicing" – the sharing of part of the licence fee with rival broadcasters, the idea of which the BBC loathes.

Such is the closeness of the relationship between the BBC and Jowell, however, that Birt will carry on being ignored until after the election when Tessa will insist that Tony reconsiders the former Chief Dalek's role in the cabinet office once and for all.



I-SKY

"A rogue asteroid will miss the earth by a whisker in 2029, it was revealed last night. The giant rock, labelled MN4, will pass so close on April 13 that it will come inside the orbit of Sky TV's satellites."

— 'News' story in the *Sun*, 14 February.

"Why did the judges for the Bafta award for TV news story of 2004 extend the closing date for entries? Surely it couldn't be to allow ITN more time so its tsunami entry would look better… I hear Sky News, which beat ITN and BBC by a mile with its lightning reaction, is spitting feathers about the Bafta rule-bending."

— Lead item in the *Sun*'s new 'diary' column, 8 March.

CORRECTION

WHILE some former colleagues of BBC news producer Kate Peyton were angered by the lack of a reference to her murder in Mark Thompson's weekly email bulletin on 14 February (reported in *Eye* 1127), staff elsewhere in the corporation point out that to be fair to the director-general, he did send out a special email to staff on 10 February telling them of Ms Peyton's death and commemorating her career. Apologies.

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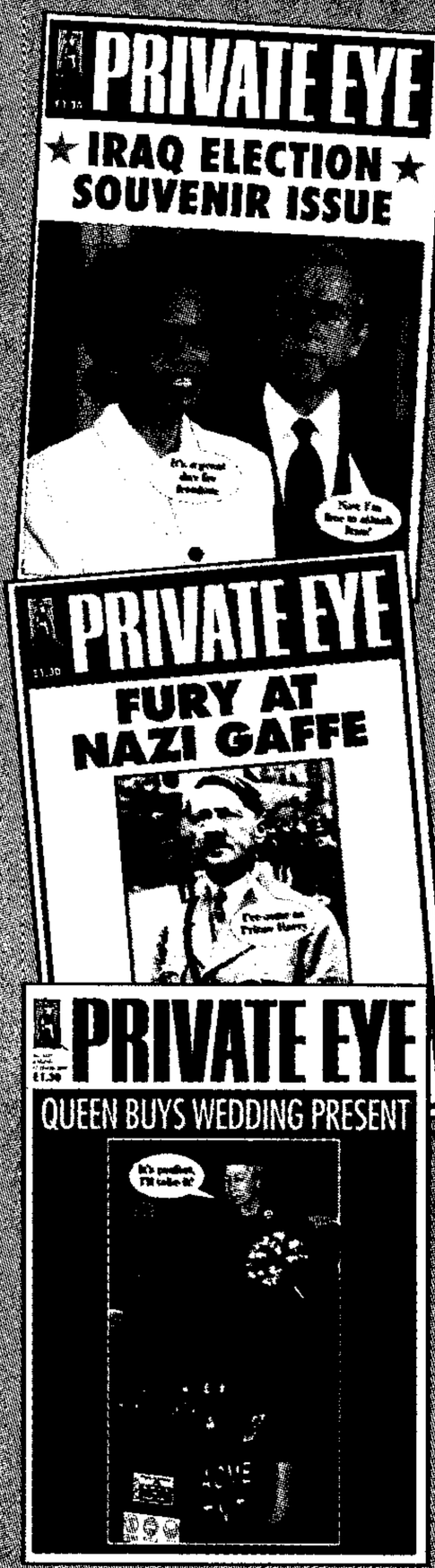

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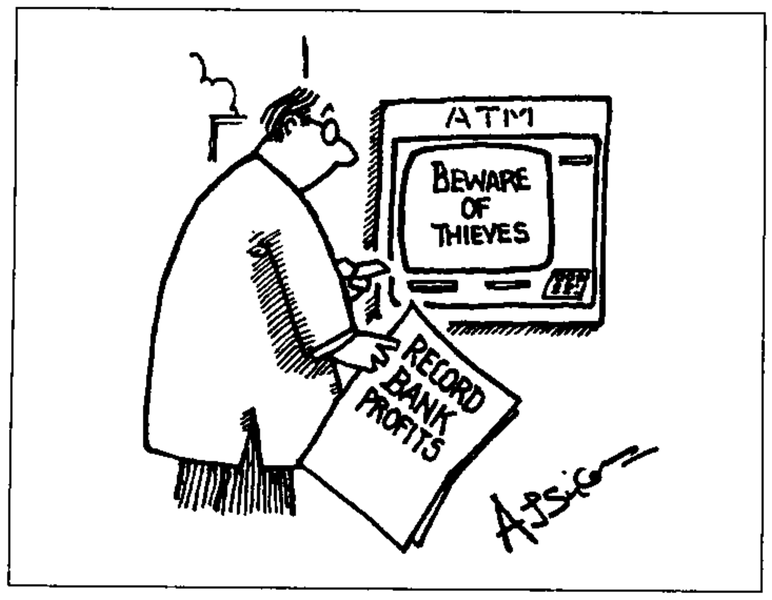


the taxpayer to be defrauded through the higher costs that were paid.

The companies also claim that the secret arrangements in fact saved the NHS money when the prices of some of the generics rose sharply as a result of production cutbacks and shortages. This again is unlikely to be accepted by the NHS or the SFO.

Although this is the first time that the SFO has brought a price-fixing case, there have been several similar prosecutions in the US in the past three years. In every case the companies have jointly settled civil and criminal charges long before any trial in return for huge payments of compensation and criminal fines. Such deals are readily accepted by US prosecutors so long as the number on the cheque is right. The next few months will see whether a similar strategy will play out here.

"I DON'T know about technology and I don't know about finance and accounting." So said former WorldCom chief executive Bernie Ebbers, on trial for creating the biggest bust in US history – almost £6bn.

So what did he know about? How to give greedy Wall Street bankers and brokers what they wanted – more and more takeovers and ensuring WorldCom always hit its numbers.

On Wall Street and in the City, big M&A fees, not big business brains, rule then and now.

THAT old *Eye* favourite, serial advance fee fraudsman Alan Shephard, may need to fall back on his age (67) and ill-health if he is to avoid extradition to the US on fraud charges involving almost $19m which he is accused of separating from victims there as well as in Canada and the UK from 1999 to 2002.

Shephard faces a 14-count indictment in Washington DC, handed down in August last year. He was arrested in Britain in February and faces an extradition hearing on 1 April. For a man who first appeared in the *Eye* carrying out the same upfront fees-for-fictional-loans scam all the way back in 1977, it can safely be said Alan Shephard is overdue.

'Slicker'

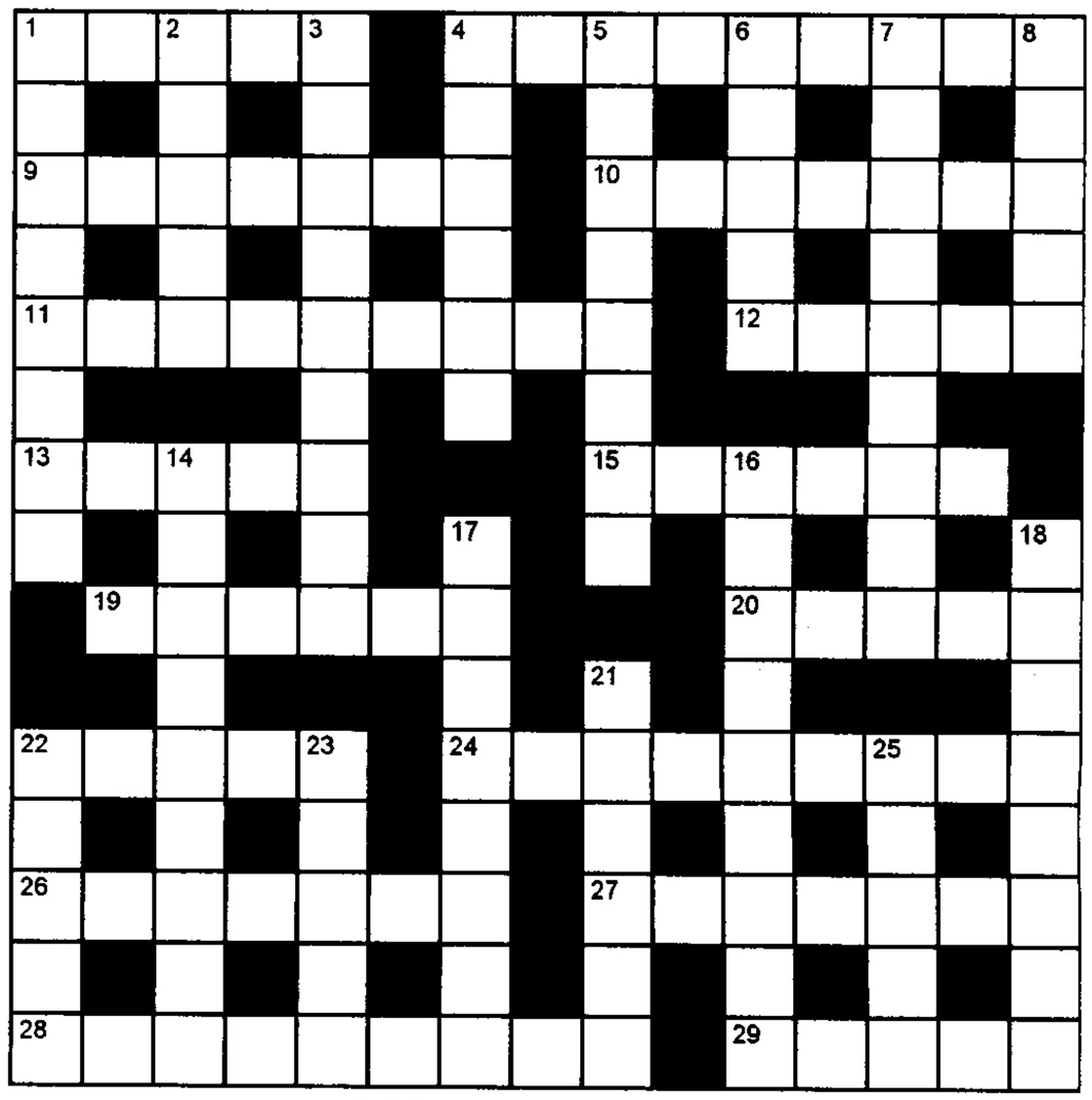
Number crunchings

161 ■ Number of staff working on the Saudi armed forces project at the defence export services organisation, the government body promoting British weapons sales abroad.

160 ■ Number of staff working at the export control organisation, the government's weapons sales watchdog trying to ensure components for WMD are not sold to dodgy regimes.

EYE CROSSWORD 283

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 23 March 2005.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

1/29 Brown, after having had a roasting, hard to take at breakfast time? (5,5)
4 Quite willing to nuzzle between bollocks, as witnessed on playing fields of Eton, etc. (4,5)
9 Shag (not the first) before date made to foam at the mouth (7)
10 Material bollocks (7)
11 Lancashire offering one to Blair's better(?) half, a potentially embarrassing issue (3,6)
12 Tumescent in short pants (5)
13 "Label Gordon 'useless c—'", Cherie indignantly starts (5)
15 Join the Navy to see emasculated blokes stand like they're pissed? (6)
19 Fanny's method of lifting weights (6)
20/23 Ken Livingstone's "dead"? Chancellor's on a roll, maybe (5,5)
22 To mount Conservative member ... (5)
24 ... a visceral perversion of royal followers (9)
26 Allow Tory to come poetically, we hear (7)
27 Administrator putting speed in utter crap drug (7)
28 One who defames "Manxman Queen"? Not I (9)
29 See 1ac.

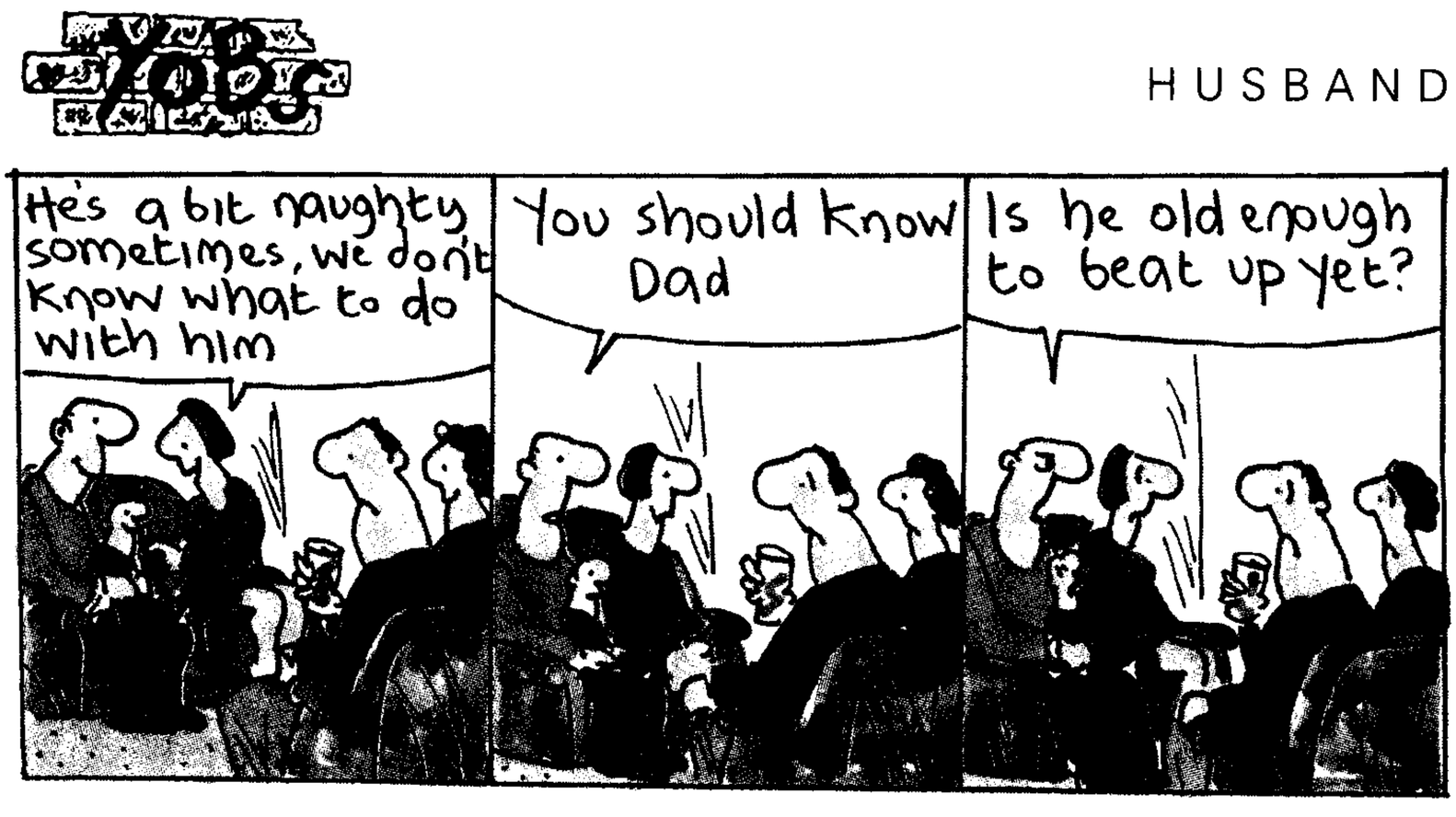
DOWN

1 Organ hard when gripped by Bunny's tight squeezes (4,4)
2 Intelligent? Not Blair's no. 1, that's true (5)
3 Follower of Osama Bin Laden, tits rearranged, boob tucked in? (9)
4 Roger: "God! That provided a warm-up between the sheets!" (6)
5 Socialist element finished – it didn't appeal to the consumer? (8)
6 Get hold of government's top bastard file? (5)
7 State if Tone's broken promises to voters (9)
8 Like a prat, Cyclops is going to penetrate Stephen Fry – extremely (5)
14 An attempt at rebranding that failed to deliver satisfactorily! (9)
16 Be horribly ill outside clubs? Not welcome at the *Eye* office! (5,4)
17 Dim-witted listener's puffed up response to a beating (5,3)
18 Elected, note, Labour's thoroughly uncool (2,1,5)
21 Substitute TV presenter, one covering Virginia with sticky stuff? (6)
22 Plonkers turn up with *Sun* (5)
23 See 20 Across
25 Topless sex model has arse reduced by a third – but hardly a star (5)

Crossword 282 winner: ANDREW BATESON

ACROSS: 8 Chipped in 10 Igloo 11 Dosed 12 Birthmark 13/17 Pressing the flesh 14 Joseph 16 Legatee 18 Pull off 20 Emblem 22 Vibrator 25 Scallywag 26 Strap 28 Oasis 29 No regrets.

DOWN: 1 Acid 2 Ginsberg 3 Spades 4 Snort 5 Nightowl 6 Sleaze 7 Cockchafer 9 Debunked 13 Palmerston 15 Springer 19 On target 21 Brassy 23 Resign 24 Swank 27 Piss.



Down on the Farm

DEFRA's response to the letter from 350 vets calling on Margaret Beckett to allow a cull of TB-infected badgers has been horribly predictable.

The vets wrote in "despair" at Defra's refusal to face up to the crisis engulfing the dairy industry as Britain's cows succumb en masse to the epidemic of bovine TB in an exploding badger population. Even on ministry figures, within 10 years the compensation bill for the destruction of TB-infected cows will have reached £2bn; and the UK is in imminent danger of losing its "TB-free" status, which could cost a further £600m a year in lost dairy exports.

All this, say the vets, is because Defra is determined to ignore the overwhelming evidence that the only way to halt the TB epidemic is to cull sick badgers. Since 1997, when Labour came to power, Defra has refused to issue any further licences for badger-culling; and TB in both badgers and cattle has exploded.

Mrs Beckett and sidekick Ben Bradshaw responded with a limp policy document and no commitment to actually do anything. Bradshaw also made the usual noises about how impossible it would be to allow a badger cull because animal lovers wouldn't like it. (The Labour party, remember, received a £1m donation from the Political Animal Lobby.) But have we missed something here?

This is the government which, in 2001, ordered the illegal slaughter of more than eight million healthy animals in the foot and mouth epidemic, having refused to heed the advice of the world's top veterinary scientists that it could be avoided by mass-vaccination. And isn't it also odd that the RSPCA should have backed Defra's refusal to allow the culling of badgers? Back in 2001 it was the same RSPCA which, when presented with evidence of more than 60 examples of flagrant cruelty to animals during the FMD crisis, refused to take any action.

So the killing of healthy farm animals is fine, while killing sick badgers is out of the question. As the vets pointed out, the real victims of this sentimentality include the thousands of badgers already doomed to die a horrible and lingering death by their disease.

'Muckspreader'

BRITAIN'S unsung team of bee inspectors is about to be halved by budget cuts, just as Europe faces another potentially devastating bee crisis.

The government's honeybee health programme, run by DEFRA, has been told to cut its budget by 20 percent by 2008 to save around £250,000.

Around 40 seasonal bee inspectors and eight regional bee inspectors go out every summer to check hives for potentially fatal diseases, including foul brood and varroosis. Varroa is the parasite which wiped out most of the wild honeybees in the early 1990s.

Minutes of a meeting between DEFRA and various bee-keeping organisations reveal that research work at the National Bee Unit will be preserved, so savings will come mainly from the inspectorate, involving a 50 percent reduction in inspectors, and the loss of two regional bee inspectors.

From 2005 varroosis will be deregulated, with European foul brood to follow in 2008 – ensuring less work for the smaller team of inspectors. But what about the small hive beetle, which has devastated bee populations in America and Australia, was found in Portugal last October and has appeared in several other EU states? The beetle, which destroys honeycombs, could be more harmful to bee-keeping than foot and mouth was to cattle farming.

As well as making more than £10m worth of honey, bees contribute £120m to the economy, mainly by pollinating the UK's fruit orchards, according to a government study in 2001.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"There were rumours about this kind of thing happening when I was at mortuary school in 1970," detective Robert Turner told a press conference outside Lake Jackson police station in Texas, "but this is the first time I've ever come across anyone actually doing it. Taking alcohol in an enema has just the same intoxicating effect as swallowing it, and Mrs Warner poured at least two bottles of sherry straight into her husband's bowel. And we're not talking about little bottles here either, these were 1.5 litre bottles of Thunderbird sherry, twice as strong as wine. It's no wonder he died."

After being charged with negligent homicide and released on $30,000 bail, Tammy Jean Warner defended her actions. "My husband Michael was an alcoholic, and he also had problems with his throat. Some days he just couldn't swallow the alcohol, so he started taking wine enemas, and he always asked me to help him with the funnel. Most days he'd just take

one bottle, but yesterday he asked me to pour a second one in, and a little whiskey. And vodka, and some champagne perry too. And a tot of rum and some cider. So I did. He seemed okay when I went to bed, but this morning when I woke up, he was dead."

Police later revealed that Michael Warner's blood alcohol level at the time of his death was 0.47%, six times the legal intoxication limit. If found guilty, his wife faces a maximum of two years in prison. *(Houston Chronicle, 2/2/05. Spotter Brian Rowlands)*

–o–

ESRC Oxford Spring School. Introduction to Nonparametric Regression. Nonparametric regression analysis is regression without an assumption of linearity. The scope of nonparametric regression is very broad, ranging from 'smoothing' the relationship between two variables in a scatterplot to multiple-regression analysis and generalised regression models (for example, logistic nonparametric regression for a binary response variable). Unthinkable only a few years ago, methods of nonparametric-regression analysis have been rendered practical by advances in statistics and computing, and are now a serious alternative to more traditional parametric-regression modelling.

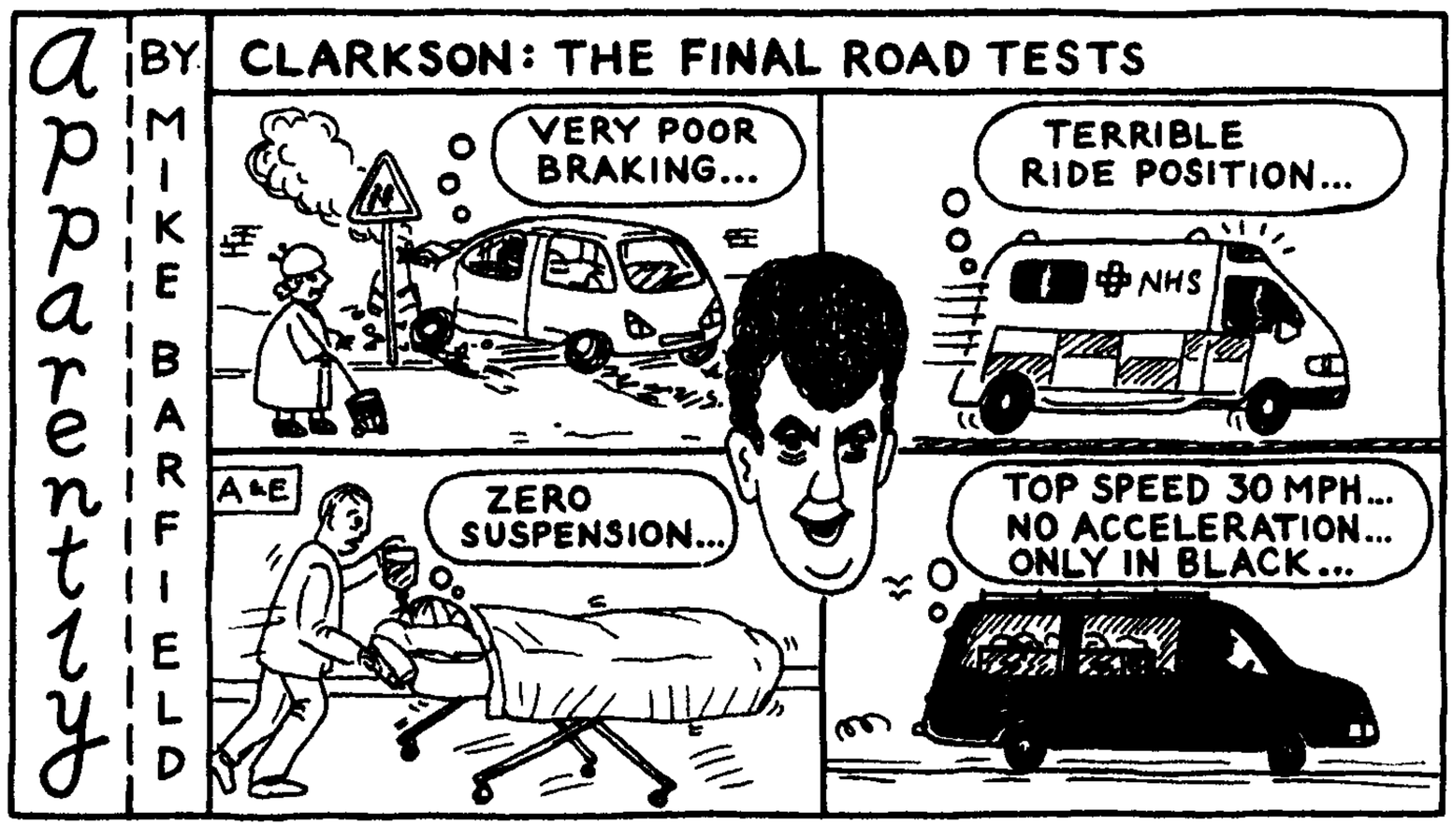
This short course aims to provide a broad introduction to nonparametric regression, covering the following topics: binning, local averaging, and kernel estimators; local-polynomial regression ('lowness'); robust nonparametric regression; regression and smoothing splines; smoothing time-series data; statistical inference for nonparametric regression; the role of nonparametric regression in data analysis; nonparametric multiple regression, including additive regression models; generalised nonparametric regression, including generalised additive models. Computing will be done in R, a brief introduction to which is provided in a half-day session preceding the course.

These courses will be taught at the Department of Politics and International Relations, Oxford University, by John Fox (McMaster University). Both courses can be taken separately. (ESRC Oxford Spring School Short Courses Prospectus. Spotter: Graham Curry)

–o–

"We received a tip-off that Mr Song had been imprisoned by his own cult members," a spokesman for Gyeonggi provincial police told reporters, "so we surrounded their religious headquarters in Yongin. Inside, we found four cult members, including Mr Lee, who told us that everything was well, and that their leader had simply been walled up in the basement at his own request since 1997, so that he could experience immortality and rebirth. At that point, we became suspicious and decided to break down the walled-up door of the basement. Inside, we found the body of Mr Song, lying in bed. He had clearly been dead for several years.

"Having interviewed Mr Lee, we believe that the devotees had grown seriously disillusioned with Mr Song over many years. When he began his group in the 1980s, he specialised in treating incurably ill people from his bed in the basement, using chi, or life energy, and most of his followers were very impressed. But gradually, his four closest devotees began to notice that the sick people never got better, they just quietly died, and the quartet gradually became more and more disillusioned. In 1997, it seems that there was an internal power struggle over who owned the cult's property, and that led to Mr Song being imprisoned in the basement, and to Mr Lee taking over as leader. Ever since, the other members were told that Mr Song was experiencing immortality, and would return to his earthly form in due course. But in fact, he was only experiencing starvation and slow death, having been concreted up in the basement that became his tomb." *(Joongang Daily, 9/2/05. Spotter: Ben Tudor)*



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Britain's Former Top Policeman Warns Of The Deadly Peril In Our Midst

Commissioner Lord 'Knacker Of The Met' Knacker writes:

● **Make no mistake.** The reports which came across my desk when I was London's top policeman would make your hair stand on end!

They certainly did mine!

Every day I was given definitive evidence that literally millions of highly-trained Al Qaeda terrorists are openly walking the streets of London and other major cities, bold as brass, with only one thought in their heads – how to create 9/11-style havoc in every corner of this green pleasant land.

That is why there is only one way to deal with the most deadly threat ever to the men, women and children of these islands.

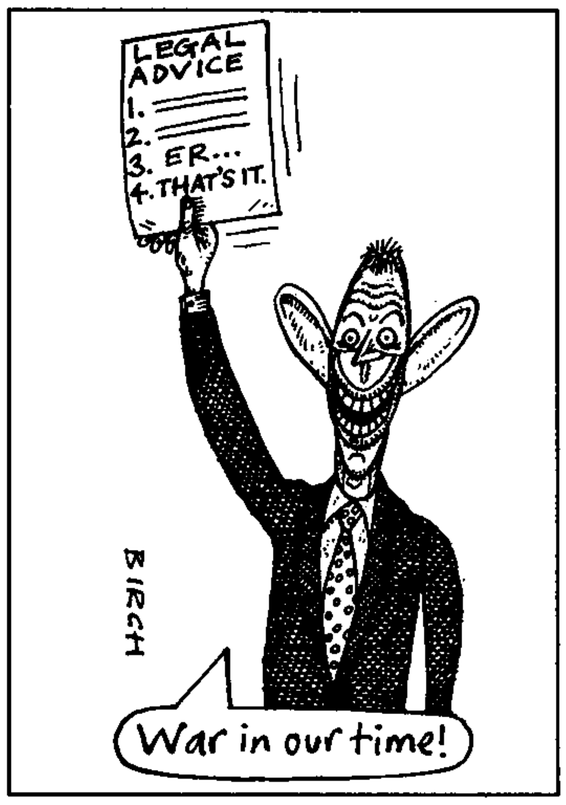
We must, without delay, have new laws giving the Home Secretary Mr Clarke whatever powers he deems necessary to avert this unprecedented assault on our liberties.

It is all very well for people to go on about human rights, Magna Carta, trial by jury and other such high-flown notions.

But if you had seen the evidence which came across my desk literally every day – and which for security reasons I am not at liberty to divulge – then you too would realise that only these extreme measures can protect our democratic way of life.

If we genuinely wish to preserve our ancient liberties, then it is imperative that we abolish them.

© As told to Charles Clarke, 2005.



COMING SOON

BBC1

Dr Who-Are-You-Looking-At-Jimmy?

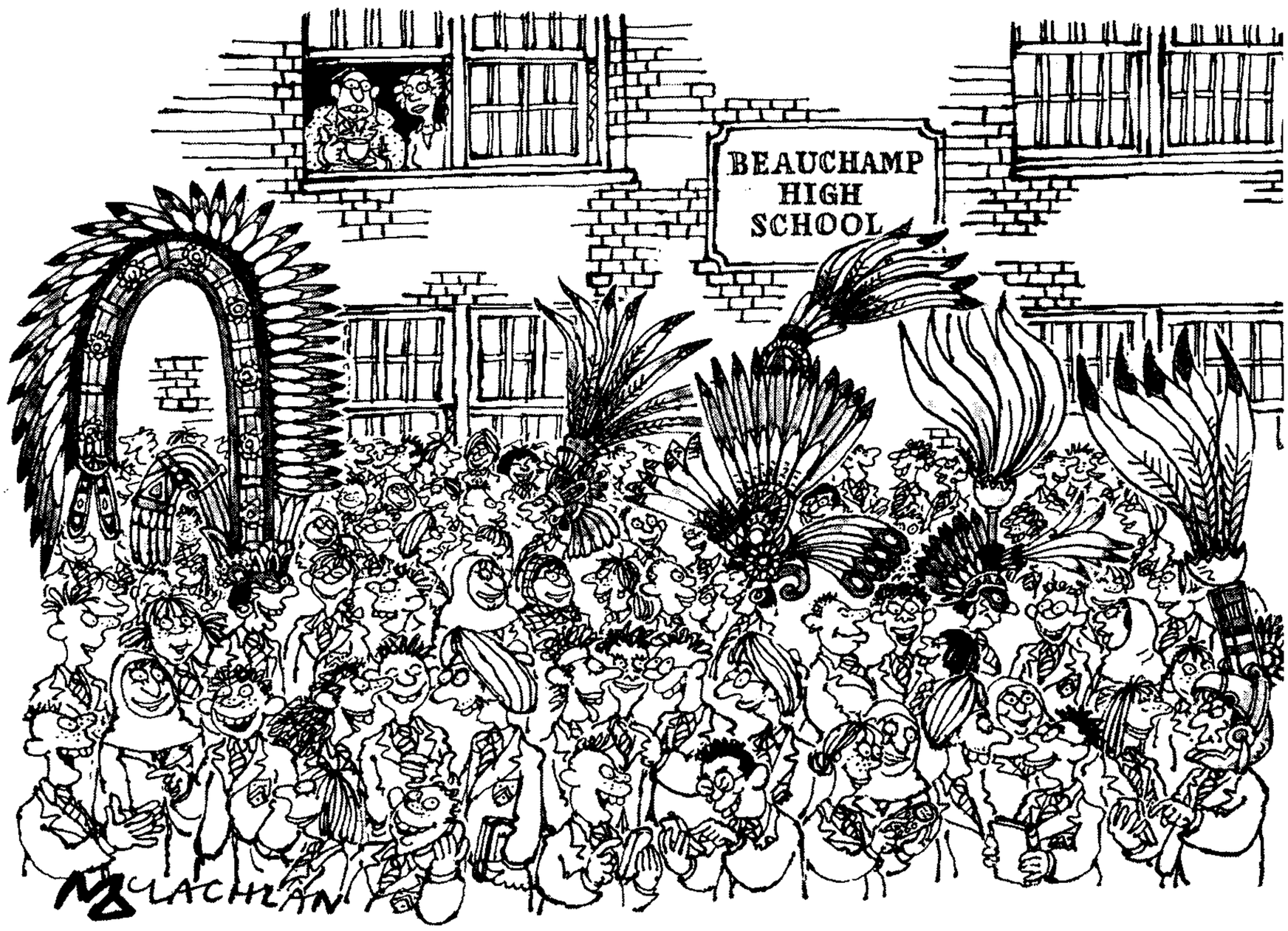
IN HIS latest incarnation, Dr Reid is transmogrified into a Scottish politician who must defeat his terrifying nemesis, Paxo the Grand Inquisitor.

Unfortunately, when the two giants meet, the Doctor is exterminated by Paxo's deadly sneer – thus bringing the series to a premature end.

CAST IN FULL

Dr Who-Are-You-Looking-At?	**Rab C. Nesbitt**
Lovely Sidekick	**Hazel Blears**
The Paxo	**Sir Stephen Fry**

"I don't normally have a problem with religious head coverings – but I'm still not sure about the Aztec youngsters"



THE DUMB PINTER

A Play In One Act

The curtain rises on an agreeable, book-lined drawing room in Labroke Grove. An elderly playwright, Sir Harold Pinterello, is seated at his desk, writing busily. Enter Lady Magnesia, his wife, carrying a tray of tea and cakes.

Lady Magnesia: Hullo, darling, what are you writing?

(Long pause.)

Lady Magnesia: It can't be another play, since you've told everyone that you're not writing any more of those.

(Long pause.)

Lady Magnesia: Let me guess. Is it a poem?

(Long pause.)

Lady Magnesia: Or is it one of those wonderful letters to the Guardian about how Mr Bush is a fucking war criminal?

(Very long pause indeed. Curtain)

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Tommy Vance, Disc Jockey

So. Farewell
Then Tommy
Vance –
The Voice
Of Rock.

You were christened
Richard Anthony
Crispian Francis
Prue
Hope-West.

"Hi there. This
Is the Richard
Anthony Crispian
Francis Prue
Hope-West
Show!"

No. This
Would not
Have sounded
So good on Radio
One.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

HEALTH secretary John Reid is swift to dismiss any evidence of NHS failure as "party political" and to attack individuals who complain about treatment for acting as "human shields" for the Tories.

But will he take the same attitude with Mrs Jan Gearon–Simm, who sent the *Eye* copies of the 15 letters that passed between herself and senior staff at Basildon Hospital? The correspondence concerned her 67-year-old husband's five-week recovery from a hip operation and subsequent infection with MRSA, and Mrs Gearon-Simm's forlorn attempts to ensure that his room was cleaned properly. Finally, for the last four days of his 35-day stay, it was.

Mrs Gearon-Simm started to keep a daily log of the cleaning. On some days the sink was cleaned but not the floor; on other days the floor was mopped (or partially mopped) but not the sink. Sometimes nothing was done at all. And at other times, even after a cleaning "inspection" had confirmed Mrs Gearon-Simm's complaints, dust and dirt remained.

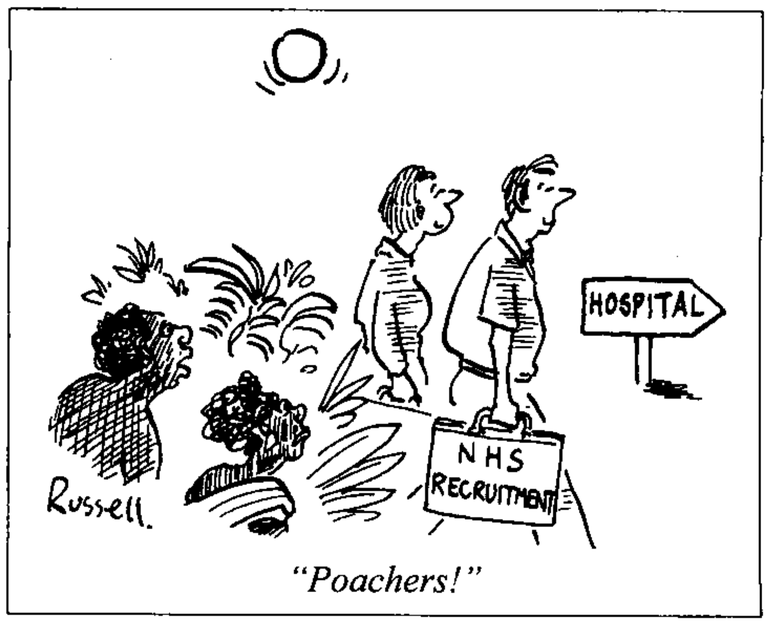
Using the freedom of information act, she obtained details of what the cleaning routine should have been, as agreed between the hospital and Medirest, the domestic service provider.

The service fell far short of what was agreed. But Mrs Gearon-Simm did not blame the cleaners, who often also had to do other domestic duties. She was too well aware that cleaning and catering outsourcing has meant that the numbers of cleaners has halved, with profit now coming before the need to disinfect.

Basildon and Thurrock NHS issued a statement to the *Eye* saying it could "assure" us that cleaning was indeed a high priority and staff regularly monitored the contractor's performance. It said matrons have a remit to oversee cleanliness and hygiene and the hospital had recently been given a "top rating in an independent inspection".

It said it was concerned at Mrs Gearon-Simm's complaints and was investigating. But the trust declined to answer any specific questions: such as why it took 15 letters to get the room cleaned properly; why there was no evidence of matron supervision; how many cleaning staff the contractor employed and at what cost; and who on earth gave the trust its "top rating".

In the light of Britain's growing MRSA problems, Mrs Gearon-Simm also wrote to Dr Reid. But given that the health secretary ignored warnings from his own chief medical officer that emergency legislation was needed to enforce hygiene standards to stop hospitals "killing and harming" patients with MRSA, he is unlikely to take much notice of a concerned pensioner.



"Poachers!"

JOHN Prescott and the government say there isn't enough parliamentary time to tighten the notoriously elastic rules governing postal voting before the general election.

This is a shame given the widespread allegations of fraud and two high-profile cases that are currently before an election court in Labour-run Birmingham – the first such court to be convened in 100 years.

Thousands of electors voting in last May's city council elections had their votes stolen. Returning officers had even written to warn the deputy prime minister *before* the elections of their concerns that likely voting fraud would put the "integrity of the elections at risk".

Labour has become so concerned about the possible impact of the investigations into "widespread illegal and corrupt misuse of postal votes" in Birmingham that party officials tried to get the electoral court adjourned until after 5 May, a likely date for the general election. The presiding judge, Richard Mawrey QC, refused.

So far Mawrey has heard evidence that in the ward of Bordesley Green, up to 3,000 people had their postal votes forged and stolen by Labour supporters. The party won the ward with a majority of 441. Now the judge is investigating similar claims in Aston ward, after shopping bags containing postal ballots marked for Labour candidates appeared at the election count last May.

A total of 55 suspects, including Labour party members and their relatives, may soon be invited to appear before the election court as Judge Mawrey disclosed that he would be asked by the petitioners to conclude that the Labour plot stretched across Britain's second city.

"I will be asked to come to the conclusion that the combination of Aston, Bordesley Green and evidence of wrongdoing in other wards is such that I can infer that, as it were, the Birmingham Labour party organised this electoral malpractice. I might come to the conclusion that this was a Birmingham-wide Labour party activity."

Last week the stakes were upped even further when the QC threatened to complain to the parliamentary ombudsman after Birmingham Sparkbrook MP Roger Godsiff wrote to him in a bid to influence his judgment. The letter was accompanied by a wad of papers detailing complaints that Godsiff had made about the conduct of the 2004 local elections.

Watching the outcome of the judge's investigations with a degree of nervousness is Fraser Kemp MP. One of "new" Labour's key election co-ordinators, he first came to prominence in the mid-1980s as the party's youngest ever regional organiser for the West Midlands. Bordesley Green, where much of the fraud so far discovered took place, is within the Hodge Hill constituency won by Labour's Liam Byrne in a bad-tempered parliamentary by-election last year, masterminded by Kemp.

Byrne's majority was a wafer-thin 460 votes. Of the 3,679 postal votes issued in that by-election, 2,176 were returned in a ballot where 20,4772 votes were cast in total. Meanwhile, m'learned friends will be interested to learn – even if John Prescott isn't – that so far some 70,000 applications for postal votes have been made in Birmingham for the forthcoming general election…

AS chancellor Gordon Brown searches for 20,000 civil service job cuts following the "efficiency review" of ex-Marconi man Peter Gershon last year, the opportunities for captains of industry remain undiminished.

"We intend to continue to recruit extensively from outside the civil service to senior posts," the prime minister told a civil service reform conference a month before Brown's announcement.

One outfit making the most of the opportunity is the recruitment practice of the *Eye*'s favourite accountancy firm, KPMG. With the bean-counters facing restrictions on what services they can provide for companies they audit because of the obvious conflicts of interest, KPMG has pulled out of private sector recruitment altogether to concentrate on placing executives in the public sector, where thankfully there are no such constraints

The move has enabled KPMG Executive Resourcing to expand its practice by 35 percent to cater for the increased demand, which it says "reflects the government's drive for greater efficiency in the public sector". The head of the recruitment outfit explained: "We believe that our focus upon public recruitment will allow us to significantly develop and expand our business… We have identified the key areas where we will concentrate our business efforts. They include education, children's services, corporate services including human resources, IT, procurement and finance, environment and housing."

In all these areas KPMG has for years earned large consultancy fees from public bodies and government departments. With the firm's recruitment arm placing increasing numbers of private sector whizzkids into the top jobs handing out public contracts, it can look forward to the fees continuing to roll in – all in the name of "greater efficiency" of course.

WHEN it suits (in matters pertaining to the BBC, for example), Downing Street has no hesitation in making the views of John Birt known to the public by way of strategic leak if necessary.

But it seems to be going to extraordinary lengths to ensure that his "blue sky" thinking while at the home office stays secret.

After Lord Birt left the BBC, he was employed to carry out two huge reviews for the home office, one on a long-term strategy for reducing crime and another on anti-social behaviour. This was curious given his background as a Dalek; and, despite numerous requests, neither of his reports were ever made public.

The Crime and Society Foundation, an independent think tank based at King's College, London, decided to apply for the reports, including keys findings and recommendations, under the freedom of information act.

Instead of releasing the reports, the home office told the society instead that it was conducting a test to see if it was in the public interest to do so. Officials suggested they were investigating whether the reports were exempt from disclosure under section 35 of the act which "relates to the effective conduct of public affairs and health and safety".

Insiders suggest that Birt's incoherent rambling on crime may not be in the public interest. So perhaps ministers' real worry is that expert scrutiny of his reports will damage their own health and safety in the run up to an election.

O·B·N

"He was one of the few ministers I admired in the Conservative Government, but I admire him even more now that he's crossed the floor."

PATRICIA HEWITT on Robert Jackson at his first Labour press conference

Submitted by J. James

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

IN THE BACK

TOWER BLOCKS

CONCRETE EVIDENCE

MINISTERS have been warned that some concrete tower blocks built in Britain in the 1960s are at severe risk of collapse.

The warning comes from Sam Webb, an architect with longstanding expertise on "large panel concrete" buildings, and follows the collapse last year of such a block in Russia in which 50 people died.

The Ronan Point (pictured left) disaster in East London in 1968 revealed the structural flaws of the design, and some blocks in London and other major cities were demolished. But others in the Midlands, the north-east, Northern Ireland and the capital still remain.

Older *Eye* readers may recall that five people died and many more were injured at Ronan Point when an explosion following a gas leak in one flat brought down the entire south-east corner of all 22 floors. The inquiry into these cheap "open system" buildings (which in the 1960s made such a fortune for the crooks associated with the infamous architect John Poulson, whose company built so many of them) fell short of banning new blocks or ordering the demolition of existing ones. But it determined that the taller multi-storey blocks needed structural reinforcement and that all gas supplies should be removed.

Later, these tighter regulations were also applied to smaller blocks of less than seven storeys. But it seems not all blocks were properly reinforced and nor were all the gas supplies removed.

Take the example of the Aylesbury Estate in Southwark, one of the largest estates in Europe. Shortly before Christmas, tenants received a note warning them that surveyors had found "possible structural problems" in their blocks. According to Webb, a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects, that is a "dangerous understatement".

In addition to the gas supplies that remain on the estate, many residents are also using portable gas heaters, a cheaper option for low income families on an estate where the heating system in the blocks of 14, 10, six and four storeys, including one which is a third of a mile long, has broken down.

Aylesbury's 2,400 flats house around 7,500 people. Southwark council has urged them not to store or use portable gas heaters; but Webb says this is an *inadequate* safeguard. As a matter of urgency he has also asked ministers to subsidise electricity heating bills for the vulnerable and has called on the council to cut off all gas supplies and remove gas cookers. He says tenants should be given replacement electric cookers and be compensated.

In the long term, he believes, the buildings should be pulled down – as they are on the Packington estate in Islington following a critical safety report.

Keith Hill, the housing minister, is well aware of the potential hazards around the country, having ordered research into the structures last year by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) after problems at Packington were brought to his attention. He noted that the potential hazard presented by piped or portable gas in buildings that had not met the new guidance "was serious".

Stuart Matthews of the BRE, which is testing the robustness of the constructions by subjecting them to simulated explosive pressures, said that so far the results were "extremely encouraging". However, although the testing covers explosions involving portable gas, crucially, it does not include piped gas.

Keith Broxup, Southwark's director of housing, wrote to local newspapers to say he wanted to reassure tenants that they were "not living in unsafe premises". The structural survey was "precautionary" and may indicate that no remedial work needs to be done. "Southwark council takes the safety of its tenants extremely seriously and the housing department is working very hard to make sure tenants feel comfortable in their homes."

But during the recent cold snap they felt neither comfortable nor safe.

Oddly enough, Tony Blair chose the Aylesbury estate to deliver his first speech as prime minister back in 1997. "There will be no forgotten people in the Britain I want to build," he said. Tell that to the forgotten tenants on Aylesbury Estate and elsewhere who are still living the legacy of the Poulson affair.

MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE

Hall of mirrors

SERIOUS doubts continue to surround the case of Simon Hall (pictured right), who is serving a life sentence for the gruesome murder of an elderly Suffolk woman in December 2001.

Hall was jailed with the recommendation that he serve a minimum of 16 years. But he has always protested his innocence; and the many glaring inconsistencies in his conviction are now being presented to the criminal cases review commission.

Joan Albert, 79, was stabbed to death with her own kitchen knife when she disturbed an intruder at her home in Capel St Mary. Six months after the killing, police turned their attention to Simon Hall, a young man whose mother used to help Mrs Albert with household chores.

Hall did have a conviction for violence – albeit a drink-fuelled street brawl with other young men – but he had a cast-iron alibi for all but half an hour on the night Mrs Albert was killed. He was out pubbing and clubbing with friends in Ipswich, dropping one off at his home between 5.30am and 6am before going home to his own mother, Lynne, at around 6.15am.

The timing of Mrs Albert's death was therefore crucial; and that unaccounted for half-hour was, the prosecution said, when Hall broke into her house intending to steal. In panic he ended up murdering her, it was said.

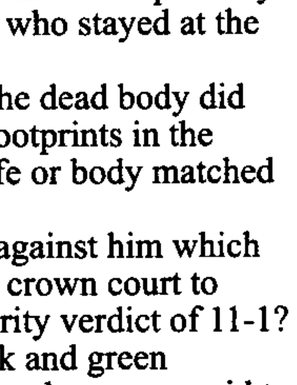
However, according to even a prosecution expert, it was likely that Mrs Albert was by then already long dead. A gastro-enterologist gave evidence that her stomach contents suggested she must have eaten only about three hours before her death. If, as evidence suggested, her usual habit was to eat a midnight snack, the time of death would have been 3am or earlier when Hall was partying in Ipswich.

The time suggested by the doctor fitted neatly with two sets of neighbours who reported being woken by a commotion at around 2am. The murderer had scaled two fences and smashed a window to gain access to Mrs Albert's house.

But, perhaps because the evidence of the gastro-enterologist, Dr Payne-James, did not fit with the prosecution case against Hall, it was not used by the prosecution and was "buried" in a pile of material handed to the defence team, who produced it in court.

The judge, Mrs Justice Rafferty, was not only dismissive of this evidence, but she also suggested, extraordinarily perhaps, that the noises neighbours had heard might be attributable to "clumsy cats".

The crown's pathologist Michael Heath gave evidence that it was almost impossible to determine the time of death. But then Dr Heath (who is facing an inquiry after concerns over his work on two other murder investigations) had not attended the scene. And he did not carry out the post-mortem examination until the following evening, nearly 11 hours after the body had been found. A paramedic had said the body was still warm but had pointed out that it was lying next to a hot radiator.



There are other serious anomalies in the case against Hall too. The motive suggested by the prosecution was burglary. But Simon Hall had no history of theft, neither was he short of money: he twice withdrew cash from his own healthy bank account on the day in question. He was also about to receive his Christmas salary. Further, he is well over six feet tall and well built, yet was supposed to have entered and left the house through a 14-inch wide broken window without suffering cuts to himself or clothing, or getting glass on him. His mother, who in any event had a key to Mrs Albert's home, noticed nothing amiss when he arrived home.

Mrs Albert suffered stab wounds to the area of her breast and groin which were inflicted *after* her death. This suggests the perpetrator was not a burglar who acted in panic and haste but possibly someone with a sexual motive who stayed at the scene of the crime for a while.

Fingerprints found above the dead body did not match Hall's and nor did footprints in the garden. No DNA from the knife or body matched Hall's either.

So what was the evidence against him which persuaded the jury at Norwich crown court to convict him – albeit by a majority verdict of 11-1? Two sets of fibres – black flock and green polyester – found in his home and car were said to match those found at the crime scene.

According to the prosecution, it was the combination of the two that made the case so compelling. Yet the bulk of fibres, the black ones, were so common in thousands of products that it was established that the local Tesco store alone had sold five pairs of jeans with the fibres in them on the day before the killing. And the Crown's expert agreed that the green fibres could have been put at the scene not directly by the killer, but by secondary contact. What is more, Hall's friends told the court he was dressed in blue.

The are big concerns too about the way the crime scene was preserved and forensically examined. Much time and effort was wasted initially on the discovery of a pubic hair in Mrs Albert's bathroom – until it was discovered that it belonged to a police officer who had used the lavatory.

Unless the criminal cases review commission orders an appeal, Simon Hall, now 27, faces another 13 years.

Daylight robbery

MICHAEL O'Brien, who served 11 years for a murder he did not commit, has abandoned his legal battle with the home office over being forced to pay "bed and board" charges for his prison cell.

He had been contesting a £37,158 deduction from the compensation paid for his wrongful conviction for "saved living expenses" while being detained (see *Eyes passim*); but he has been advised that he risks losing far more – up to £140,000 – in legal costs if he loses his case in the House of Lords.

His lawyers, Hickman and Rose, had successfully argued in the high court that the recent decision to introduce board and lodging charges "not only added insult to injury" but was unlawful. But this was overturned on appeal.

The battle has now has been taken on by Vincent Hickey and his cousin Michael, who served 18 years after their wrongful conviction in 1979 for the murder of Stourbridge paperboy Carl Bridgewater – and who were similarly charged for prison porridge and stinking cells.

MEDIA NEWS

WHEN TV producer Elena Cosentino took CNN to an industrial tribunal for unfair dismissal, she expected to face her former boss, CNN's senior vice president Tony Maddox, across the courtroom. After all, Maddox had written an email that was a pivotal piece of evidence in her case.

Elena was made redundant 18 months after her fiancé died in a motorbike accident. Following the accident she had become seriously depressed and her doctors recommended time off work.

In the email Maddox sent to CNN executive producer Rachel Brown a year after Cosentino's fiancé had died, he wrote: "Before I unzip the bodybag let me check something. With Business Traveller back giving us four feature shows in production in London should we consider whether now is the time to lose her?... Your call though. If you want her gone, she's gone."

His choice of words made CNN journalists around the world wince since "bodybag" is a taboo word at the network. Cosentino's lawyers asked CNN's legal team if Maddox would be appearing before the tribunal and were surprised to hear that the big cheese would not be called. What's more, CNN's solicitors said, he would be outside the court's jurisdiction since he lives and works in Atlanta.

Strange then that in the week the tribunal was reaching its most dramatic stage, CNN's internal schedule showed that Maddox was in London, not in Atlanta. Also strange that a reservations manager at the Courthouse Hotel Kempinski, just yards from CNN's London headquarters, said he recalled seeing Mr Maddox there that week.

When the *Eye* asked CNN for verification of his movements, it would only say that these details were "incorrect" but not in what respect. "We don't get into details on staff's personal engagements and we don't comment on ongoing legal actions," a spokeswoman said.

So where was Maddox? And, more importantly, why would he leave his underlings to respond to the tribunal's interrogation over the "bodybag" email?

DUMB BRITAIN

Sadie Nine show, Radio London

Sadie Nine: Which chemical element has the symbol K?

Contestant: Kryptonite.

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: King Priam was associated with which besieged city?

Contestant: Newcastle.

AR: Which eccentric entrepreneur and film producer designed a cantilevered bra for Jane Russell to wear in the film The Outlaw?

Contestant: Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Today With Des & Mel, ITV

Melanie "Mel" Sykes: In 2002 the Queen celebrated her Golden Jubilee. In which year did she come to the throne?

Contestant: 1958.

Sykes: No, it was 1952. I wouldn't have got that.

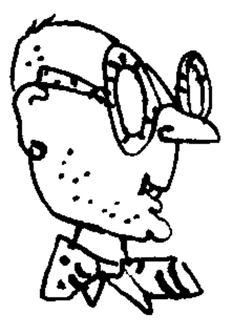
Contestant: No it was far too hard.

CRITICS IN CON-TEXT

PRESS adverts for Michael Winterbottom's controversial film *9 Songs* point out that the *Evening Standard* called it "A Cinema Sensation".

David Smyth did indeed use that phrase, in an interview with the director on 28 February. But what he wrote was: "Winterbottom has moved a long way on from *9 Songs*, as will the rest of us when we realise that while it may be a cinema sensation, it is also rather dull."

AD NAUSEAM



"JAMIE Oliver turns on Sainsbury's" screamed delighted headlines last week when the celebrity chef again laid in to Bernard Matthews' infamous Turkey Twizzlers in a debate at the Royal College of Physicians.

"Sainsbury's sell them and I don't agree with them either," he said, adding: "I just don't advertise junk food for Sainsbury's."

Oliver was wrong on the first count – Sainsbury's retorted the next day that it hadn't sold a Turkey Twizzler since 2003 – but why would he suddenly turn on his ever-generous benefactor, just to back up his current TV series?

Probably because he knows there's every chance his services as Sainsbury's quality policeman will soon be surplus to requirements. His current £1m contract expires in May and, further, Sainsbury's £47m advertising account is under review, with four of London's largest agencies left slugging it out last week after a month's frenetic pitching.

Although AMV, the agency that made Oliver the face of the supermarket, is still on the shortlist, if it doesn't win, Oliver is definitely gone. And even if it does win, after last week's ill-advised tirade he might be axed regardless.

OPODO, the online travel agency owned by airlines including British Airways, Air France and Alitalia, has put its encyclopaedic travel knowledge at the centre of its current advertising campaign.

"Opodo Knows" is the comforting slogan, and one of the posters doing the rounds runs thus: "Opodo knows the five worst places in the world to lose your contact lenses," before a list that begins "1: Watching the Aurora Borealis, Tromso, Sweden."

Whoops! What Opodo doesn't know, evidently, is that Tromso is in Norway.

***EYE* 1122 told how the Hollywood actress Gwyneth Paltrow was paid £3m to endorse Martini, even though she is teetotal.**

You'd have thought that global booze brands might have learnt their lesson with Hollywood stars after such an expensive oversight. But no! Last week saw the launch of a new global ad campaign for Heineken, starring John Travolta. Days later, in an interview about his new movie *Be Cool*, he revealed that he'd only ever been drunk once, after which he decided that "alcohol was not for me."

BIRTSPEAK

The second wave of digital is creating a hybrid world featuring more linear, non-participatory media, with increasing audience participation, engagement and creativity.

— *Mark Thompson, BBC director-general.*

BBC pay money to someone with a criminal record

Warballs

● "As with their chums Franz Ferdinand, there's an affinity for rhythms of Russian, Balkan and Polish origin, rather than for the blues. This may reflect post-Iraq disillusion with American tropes." — Review of Kaiser Chiefs album, ***Independent***.

● "Football fans who poke fun at supporters of Premiership team Middlesbrough by wearing gas masks at games have been banned because of fears over terrorist chemical attacks. Some supporters, particularly from Sunderland and Newcastle United, have worn white chemical suits and dust masks over their faces in reference to smog created by Teesside's massive petro-chemical industry... A spokesman for Middlesbrough Football Club said: 'These suits can incite crowd trouble. Given the world situation we feel they are particularly inappropriate'." — BBC news online.

● "As portable status symbols, a watch worth several hundred thousand dollars, encrusted or just complicated, became unbeatable... Last year's Color Dreams, all pastel colours and crazy numbers, Nadine Broden says, 'was designed to inject some joie de vivre into the gloom of the post 9/11, war-in-Iraq world'." — ***Independent*** feature on wristwatches.

● "'A top LA-based cosmetic surgery clinic has invited stars from this year's Oscars to choose from a menu of procedures, free of charge,' says our source. 'After the war in Iraq and the Indian Ocean tsunami, they don't want to advertise this. Stars who take up the offer have been guaranteed absolute discretion.'" — Handbag.com.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

DUNN AND DUSTED

A DAMNING auditor's report into financial shenanigans at Newtownabbey borough council in Northern Ireland has stirred councillors to... do nothing.

The report found that chief executive Norman Dunn was to blame for the "unlawful" practice of officers not taking their full leave entitlement, then paying themselves in lieu; and for the illegal use of council credit cards to run up thousands of pounds of personal expenditure by senior officers, Dunn included.

Another unlawful policy was that of paying compensation to officers for premature retirement or redundancy. In three cases the auditor had looked at, he said awards totalling more than £100,000 had been paid "without appropriate levels of consideration".

Newtownabbey's councillors might have been expected to have some tough questions for their chief exec. But not a bit of it. Instead the council – dominated by good ol' boys from the two big unionist parties – passed a motion recording its "full confidence" in Dunn. Members voted to write to the NI department of the environment, expressing concern about the "tenor" of the report, and to complain to the *Belfast Telegraph* for having the cheek to write about it.

THAT'S RICHMOND

TONY "Pants on Fire" Arbour, Tory leader of Richmond borough council, called the *Eye*'s exposure of his press officer Alex Aiken's attempts to intimidate volunteers on an independent community website "scurrilous" and "a pack of lies" (*Eye* 1126). But he's become inexplicably tongue-tied since the last *Eye* revealed how *he* had lied about the affair.

At a council meeting on 1 March Arbour was asked by the Lib Dems' Sir David Williams, a former leader of the council, if he would explain "why he appears to have misinformed the council in view of the article in *Private Eye* of 18 February which states... 'alas it is Cllr Arbour who seems to be the purveyor of porkies'."

Cllr Arbour replied: "I didn't."

Cllr Williams then asked: "Does the leader of the council agree that silence is not an adequate response to the allegations... and that he owes it to the residents of the borough, to his colleagues and to the good name of the office which he holds either to sue *Private Eye* or to resign?"

Answer: "I will not respond to anything in that newspaper... I consider it a badge of honour to be featured in *Private Eye*."

Cue jeers of "So you lied!" from the opposition – which were met with silence.

PS: The entertaining exchange was witnessed by local newspaper hacks, but not a word appeared in the *Richmond & Twickenham Times*.

PPS: Richmond council spends hundreds of thousands of pounds a year advertising in the *Richmond & Twickenham Times*.

BOW ST RUNNER

TOWER HAMLETS councillor Kumar Murshid, a former adviser to London mayor Ken Livingstone, appeared in court last week accused of stealing £240,000 from a Stepney-based regeneration organisation, Youth Action Scheme (YAS), of which he was chairman (*Eye* 1087).

Murshid, 49, stepped down as a regeneration adviser to Livingstone, and as a board member of the London Development Agency (LDA), after his arrest.

As well as 12 theft charges, relating to the period between 1 February 2001 and 9 January 2003, the Limehouse ward councillor faces two charges of failing as a director to maintain records and file company accounts. He appeared before Bow Street magistrates on 9 March with four others including Nasir Uddin, 32, a former St Dunstan's and Stepney Green ward councillor and deputy leader of Tower Hamlets. Uddin is charged with 28 counts of theft, totalling £69,081, between 1 February 2001 and 1 May 2003.

Uddin, a former employee of YAS, is also charged with one further count of failing as a director to maintain records and file company accounts.

The charges follow an external forensic audit of YAS completed in 2003. Murshid and Uddin were suspended from the Labour party when the allegations became known.

Three other men, including Uddin's brother, Ain, 31, are charged on various counts including theft and conspiracy to defraud.

All five were remanded on unconditional bail to appear at Southwark crown court for a preliminary hearing on 30 March. No pleas were entered.

● CHAMPAGNE corks have been popping in Lambeth at a party for Lib Dem councillors and senior managers generously hosted by two of the borough's contractors, Cleanaway and Focus Education. The reason? The audit commission has upgraded Lambeth's performance from "poor" to, er, "weak". Trebles all round!

NEWS BLACKS OUT

RARE first editions of Lord Herman Ouseley's report on racism at Southwark council should attract premium prices. For the only two known owners, council leader Nick Stanton and chief executive Bob Coomber, have both spoilt their copies – scratching out many of the more telling comments. Ditto the second, third and fourth editions.

So "white hierarchy" now reads "CEO, directors and senior management teams non-representative of BME"*; "institutional racism" becomes "differential and discriminatory treatment"; and so on in the published version.

Weasel words, however, can't conceal the severity of Ouseley's condemnation of "discrimination that has ruined people's lives". Stanton and Coomber have clutched at praise given to the council's "race and equality framework" – ignoring the report's criticism of council officers' consistent failure to implement it!

Launch day was a PR disaster, despite the advice of outside spin-doctors which cost an estimated £25,000. Lord Ouseley was not even told about – let alone invited – to a press briefing from which members of the black press were physically excluded.

The first local TV images of the new era of Southwark's race relations revolution were of council heavies and two dozen police... throwing dozens of black people out of the town hall.

** "BME", for those uninitiated in council-speak, is what black people are called these days – "black minority ethnics".*

● THE *Sun*'s noisy campaign against illegal travellers' camps has the public backing of Tory Dartford council – or that of its deputy leader Jeremy Kite anyway. Kite was quoted in the paper pledging the council's support the day after the campaign was launched – even though the council hadn't actually had a meeting or taken a vote on the subject. By an amazing coincidence, Cllr Kite happens to work in the advertising department at News International, owner of the *Sun*. Wasn't it a bit of a conflict of interest? "Everyone has to work somewhere," he told the *Eye*.

MARRIAGE À LA MODEM

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

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IN THE ORIGINAL HINDI! PURE EAR NECTAR!

HIGH PRINCIPALS

THE *Times Higher Education Supplement*'s annual pay survey of university vice-chancellors was followed, as ever, by seething resentment from low-paid lecturers, researchers and support staff. And little wonder: average VC pay rose by 6.6 percent to £144,420, while underlings have experienced redundancies, pay freezes or, at best, meagre with-inflation raises.

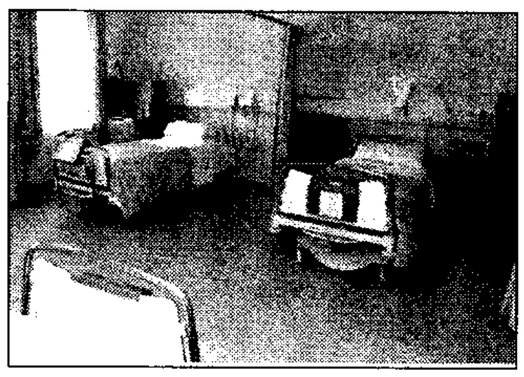
One statistic pushing up the average is the pay rise of Bath's vice-chancellor, Professor Glynis Breakwell, whose salary and perks leapt from £167,000 to £190,000 last year – more than the salaries of the VCs of Oxford and Cambridge. On top of that she gets free accommodation in a university-owned £2.5m Georgian townhouse, plus a hefty pension contribution. Nice work, indeed.

Daily Mail
FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 2005

Shock NHS report

'EVERYONE IN BRITAIN WILL DIE'

By Our Pre-Election Staff
Paul Daycare



IF PRESENT trends continue, every man, woman and child alive in Britain will be dead by the year 2150. And there is nothing the NHS can do to stop this.

That is the shock finding of a top secret report compiled by senior NHS experts, which has been suppressed on Tony Blair's personal orders.

This catastrophic failure by the NHS gives the lie to government claims that Labour is looking after Britain's health better than any government before it.

As the election looms, the people of Britain have today been confronted with the stark reality that 60 million people will all be dead, the majority of them within the next 150 years.

What an indictment of Tony Blair and his policies!

Once the NHS stood for the "National Health Service" and was the envy of the world.

Today it stands only for the "National Horror Story", and means only one thing – death.

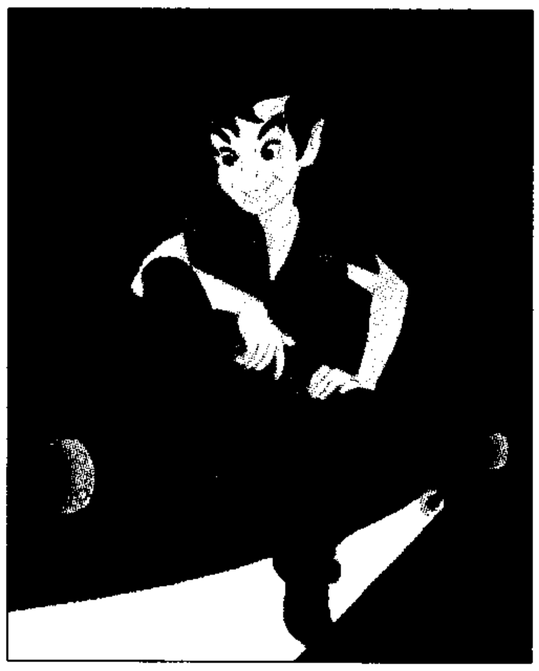
ON OTHER PAGES
■ **"Vote Labour and sign your own death warrant"** – Simon Heffer writes, p.10

Nursery Times

Friday, 13 March, 2005

NEVERLAND TRIAL Day 94

by Our Crime Correspondent
Captain Crook



IN THE most bizarre case ever to hit the world of nursery stories, Mr Peter Pan today took the stand in his pyjamas to answer charges of "Corrupting Lost Boys".

The accusations come from a Michael Darling who was befriended by Mr Pan and then taken to the fantasy world of Neverland.

Mr Pan's lawyers claim that the accusations are merely attempted blackmail and that the child was being put up to it by his mother, Mrs Darling.

The child claimed that Mr Pan had got him "high", flying through the sky to the third star on the right and straight on till morning, and had then shown him and his brother images of mermaids and Indian princesses.

Said Mr Jackson, "I deny all these alligators."

On Other Pages
● Why can't Humpty Dumpty be put back together again? NHS scandal. p2 ● Goldilocks sells burglary story to BBC. p3 ● Wolf in Grannie ID theft. p94

Moron Defends 'Fake' Diaries

by Our Media Staff **Hugh Very-Ropey** and **Maddy Tupp**

FORMER Moron editor Piers Moron today defended his decision to print diaries that have now been shown to be fakes.

Experts have pointed to passages in the diaries which cannot be genuine, and which refer to events which cannot possibly have taken place. For instance:

● **In his entry for June 12 1997, Moron claims to have had lunch with Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe at the Ivy to discuss the Iraq War.**

● On March 6 2001, Moron describes watching W.G. Grace hit a century before lunch at Edgbaston.

● **On May 23 1995, Moron claims that he did not know he had bought shares which had been tipped in his own newspaper.**

Yesterday Moron admitted that his diaries might be fakes, but he defended his decision to publish them: "Okay, so they are not real, but they are a recreation of the sort of thing which might have happened if I hadn't made it all up".

My eBay

ccccccc (7)

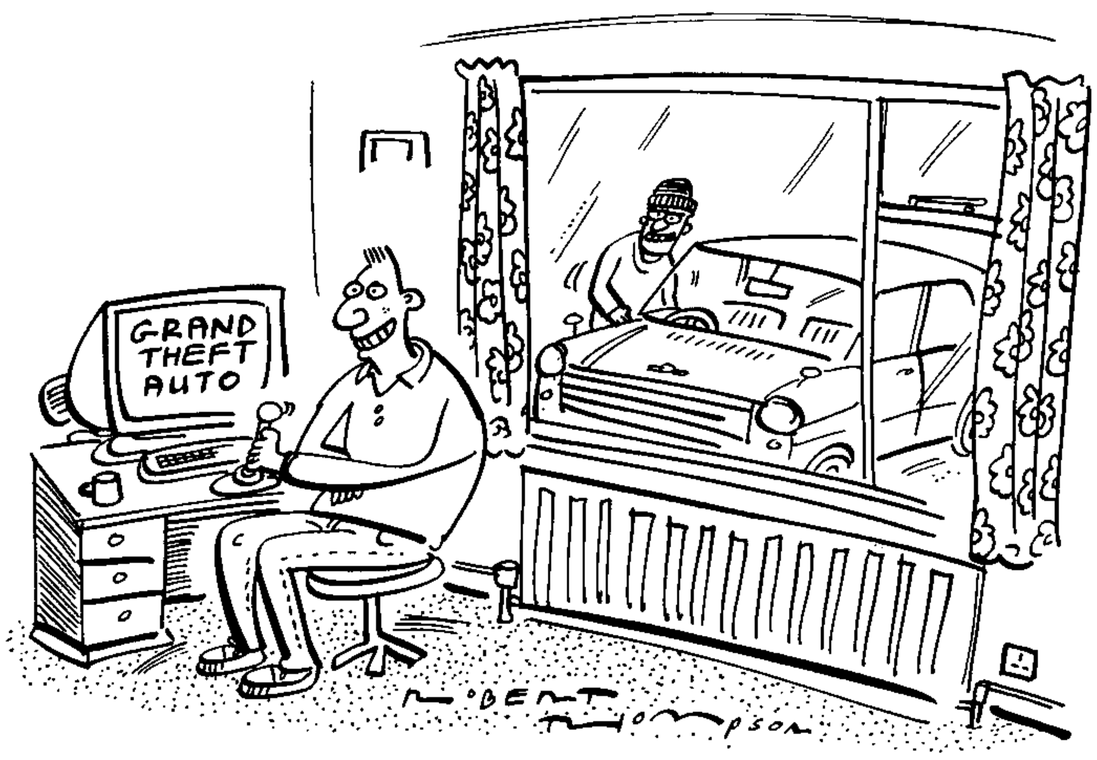
Ellen MacArthur

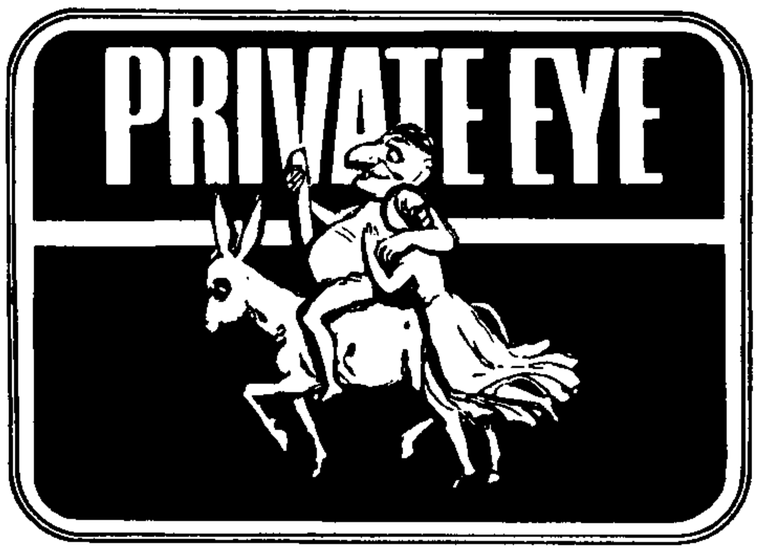
Items I'm Bidding On (1-2 of 2 items)

		Current Price	Postage Cost	Bids
☐	**Max Factor waterproof mascara**	£9.99	£2.00	1
☐	**1 dozen packs Kleenex Man-Size tissues**	£7.99	£4.00	1

Items I'm Selling (1-3 of 3 items)

		Current Price	Postage Cost	Bids
☐	**500 self-adhesive Velcro patches, as new**	£9.99	£4.50	0
☐	**Box of Pot Noodle cartons, assorted flavours (4 gross)**	£19.99	£10.00	0
☐	**Rod Stewart 'Greatest Hits' CD**	£2.99	£1.00	1





Tony's sunset...

- **Faking it: The Moron Diaries** 5
- **Talking dirty with Dr Reid; ballot-rigging in Brum: HP Sauce** 6
- **An inspector appals: Kosminsky's Kelly** 8
- **Mr Publishing and Dr Sex** 24,25
- **All fall down? A tower block time bomb; plus Pensions Special** 26, 27

Number crunching

£333

■ Amount PFI contractor Carillion charged NHS to change a single light fitting at Darent Valley hospital

£37,000,000

■ Profit made by Carillion when it sold its stake in Darent Valley hospital to Barclays

WHAT provoked John Reid's outburst on *Newsnight* last week? Was it really, as he claimed, that Jeremy Paxman had hurt the feelings of this delicate ministerial flower by calling him an "attack dog"? Er, not quite.

What roused poor sensitive Reid to fury was the discovery – too late – that the shadow health secretary Andrew Lansley was also on the programme. As soon as the broadcast was over, Reid's minders complained furiously to the BBC that he'd been "set up", explaining that he would never have appeared if he'd known that a Tory would be allowed to join the debate.

All most puzzling, since the *Newsnight* item was inspired by a press conference earlier the same day at which a Labour minister accused Michael Howard of using sick patients as "human shields" to hide behind. "Have the guts to come out into the open and debate your indefensible policy," roared John Reid (for it was he). "You won't of course, you daren't..."

MARIA Hutchings, who berated Tony Blair over the treatment of her 10-year-old autistic son John Paul, is right to use any politician she has to – even Michael Howard – to publicise how the education system fails children with special needs and how getting even the most basic help is a long and stressful battle.

But Mrs Hutchings should not hold out too much hope that anything will be done to improve things once the election is over.

Among the worst offenders for cutting back special provision and schools (over 90 closed in the last seven years) are some Tory local authorities. Ones like the relatively wealthy London borough of Wandsworth, for example, which has spent a fortune battling tribunals to the door of the high court before finally agreeing to meet the basic provision set out for Henry and Freddie Spink, two severely disabled boys in the borough (see *Eyes passim*).

Two and a half years ago the audit commission called for radical reform of education provision for those in need. But as Mrs Hutchings has made clear, it is still failing them. And until the political parties had a chance to make capital out of the issue in the run-up to an election, neither Labour nor the Tories seemed to care.

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ABC

"BLUNKETT is determined that his private life will now remain just that," Jackie Ashley reported in last Saturday's *Grauniad*, after being granted the first on-the-record interview with the former home secretary since his resignation.

"He hopes that closure has been reached on the hysterical briefing and counterbriefing over his relationship with Kimberly Quinn."

Ashley noted that there had been a stream of stories about Quinn "which some thought came from Blunkett's camp. But not, he makes clear, from him: 'I think that the others involved in this case and those around us who have often not understood the importance of privacy now have got the message that it is time to draw a line, and any action relating to the dispute that exists between us will be dealt with in private.'"

A likely story. Only a few weeks ago the *Sunday Express* diarist Adam Helliker observed Blunkett briefing *Evening Standard* editor Veronica Wadley over lunch at Green's restaurant. Since then Blunkers has made several off-the-record phone calls to newspaper editors giving his latest thoughts on the Kimberly Quinn business, including his worries about the effect of her "hedonistic lifestyle" on his son. These conversations are usually followed by articles quoting "close friends of the former home secretary". If he truly wishes to achieve "closure", perhaps closing his own mouth would be a good start.

"It's all gone peer-shaped"

DAVID Blunkett's new employers, Indepen management consultants, have many contracts with government departments and public bodies, including his own previous ministry, the department of education.

There is, of course, an official watchdog which supposedly vets the employment of ex-ministers. It is called the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments, and in its most recent annual report the guidelines are clear: "A three-month waiting period from the date of leaving office will normally be expected when the former minister is of cabinet rank, unless the advisory committee advises a longer waiting period in particular circumstances."

Yet according to the latest register of members' interests, Blunkett accepted a paid consultancy with Indepen in January this year – *one month* after his resignation from cabinet. Shome mishtake, shurely?

IS FORMER lock-'em-up-and-throw-away-the-key home secretary David Blunkett breaking ranks with his successor Charles Clarke's tough line on terror suspects?

"I have begun to know what it feels like to be under house arrest," he tells the *Independent on Sunday* thoughtfully. "Since December, I feel that I've had imprisonment without trial."

Alas Blunkett is not making an imaginative leap to empathise with people banged up for years without knowing the charges against them. He is moaning about the attentions of doorstepping hacks since the Kimberly Quinn story broke.

Still, with a house in Sheffield and a flat in London of his own, plus the home secretary's £3m grace-and-favour Belgravia townhouse which he still occupies, to choose from, it would take a hard heart indeed not to sympathise with the privations of house arrest, Blunkett-style.

LABOUR party supporters have received an email from Tony Blair saying that "people will not easily forget the cuts and privatisation programme that undermined our hospitals for years".

Just in case people *are* forgetful, "new" Labour has put 33 hospitals into private hands through the private finance initiative since 1997, with another 45 currently at various stages prior to financial close.

The Conservatives may have spent a small fortune on consultants to work out how private financing might work, but prior to May 1997 no PFI hospital contract had been secured.

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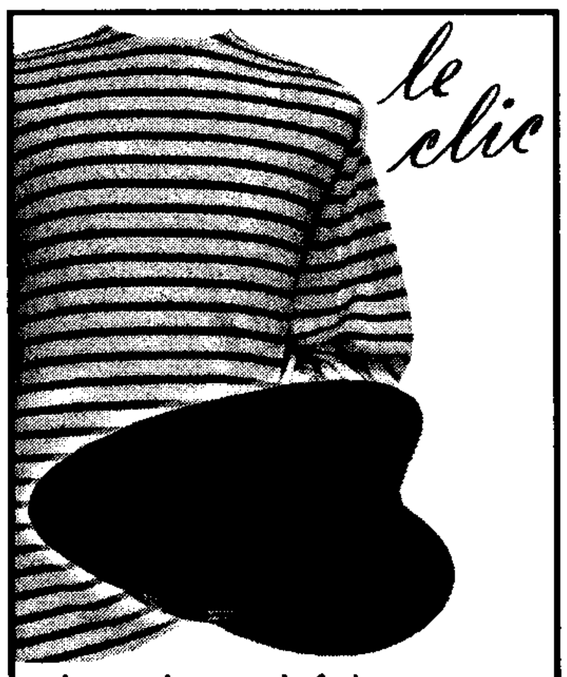

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BLUNKETT ATTACKS KIMBERLY'S 'HEDONISTIC LIFESTYLE'

by Our Home Affairs Staff **Phil Bed**

FRIENDS of David Blunkett said last night that the former Home Secretary was "deeply shocked" by what he has learned of the lifestyle of his former lover and the mother of his son, Kimberly Quinn.

According to friends of Mr Blunkett, "This woman turns out to have been having affairs with men, even though she is married.

"This shameless hussy," the friends of the former Home Secretary continued, "even had a long-running affair with a very senior politician – and it seems that she had no hesitation in accompanying him to exotic holiday locations, such as the Greek island of Intakos.

"So brazen was this latter-day Jezebel," the friends of Mr Blunkett continued, "that she even allowed herself to be made pregnant by a man who was not her husband.

"Clearly," the friends angrily concluded, "this raving nympho is totally unfitted to be the mother of my child."

"It's a great school. 'E learnt all that in two weeks"

Who Is The Father Of Kimberly's Baby?

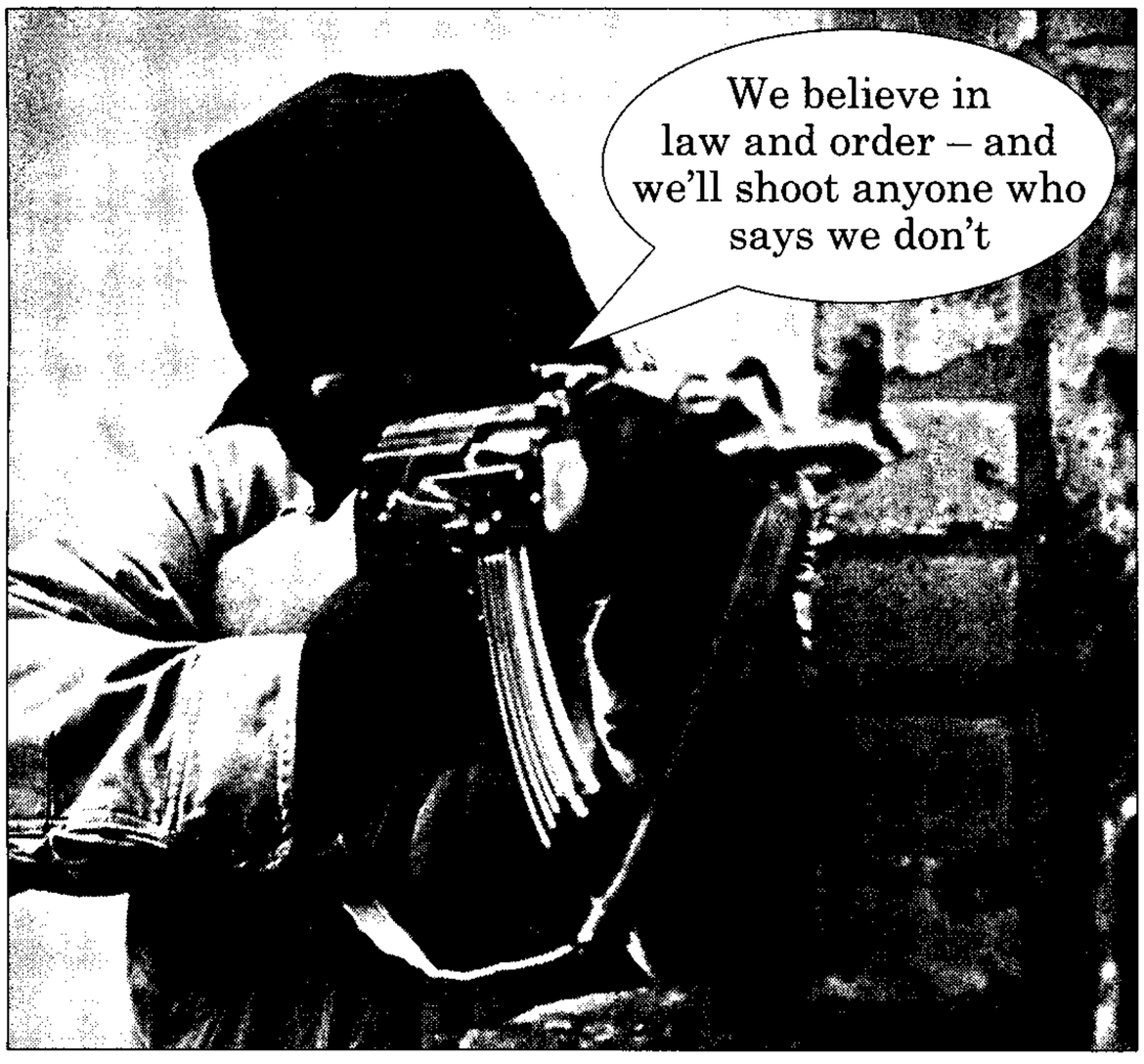
YOU DECIDE!

Is it:

(a) Simon Hoggart?
(b) V.S. Naipaul?
(c) Sir Trevor McDonald?
(d) Sir Max Hastings?
(e) Stephen Fry?
(f) Martin Bashir?
(g) Wayne Rooney?
(h) The Duke of Edinburgh?

Phone now on 845-2424124 and help clear up what they are calling the Mystery of the Millennium!

IRA – NEW SHOCK



EXCLUSIVE TO ALL PAPERS

THE RETURN OF DR WHO

by Phil Space

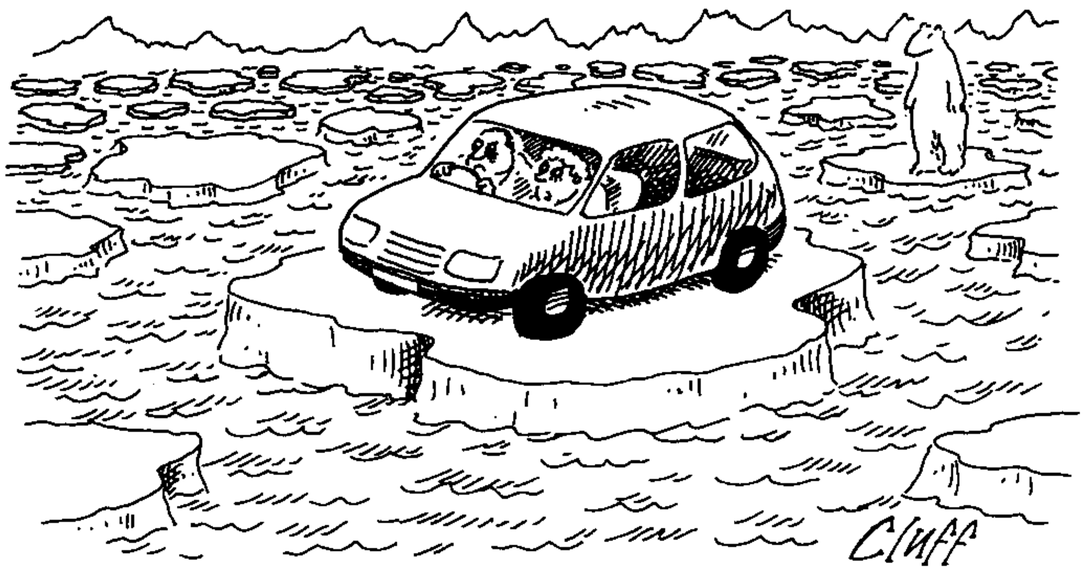
AFTER NINE long years, the BBC has revealed that *Dr Who* is returning to our screens. And that's great news if, like me, you're a dedicated fan of the show – or 'Trekker', as we're known.

Like you, I grew up watching *Dr Who*. I vividly remember hiding behind the sofa while watching the Doctor battle with his enemies, the Daleks!

And who can forget the Doctor's glamorous companions – Esther Rantzen, C3PO and Hans Solo? Or the evil Darthvaders aboard their spaceship the USS Enterprise threatening to exterminate the Doctor? Or the Tardis, the black policeman with his notorious catchphrase 'Who loves ya, Baby?'

Yes, *Blake's Seven* was part of all our childhoods, so, as a lifetime fan, all I can say is that I hope the newest Dr Who, Chris Eccleston, and his gorgeous pouting assistant Chris Evans are every bit as effective at getting people hiding behind their sofas as was my all-time favourite Doctor. Yes, with his long coat, flowing scarf and fruity voice, Harold Shipman was not a Timelord who was easily forgotten.

Yes, finally, *Dr Who* is back... and not before time... umm... have I mentioned Daleks? And the Tardis... and the scarf... er, um... is this 2000 words yet? *(You're fired. Ed.)*



"How much longer before you stop and ask for directions, Brian?"

An incendiary statement, perhaps – but what it's designed to do is ignite the blue touch paper under the UK productivity issue. If we can successfully do this, we can get UK productivity back up to where it should be – alongside, or even ahead of, productivity levels of the European Union and the USA.

Whatever side of the debate you fall on, we should all agree on one thing– our education system is not evolving fast enough to meet the business demands of a new century. It is not producing enough people of the right calibre, with the skills and appropriate qualifications to galvanize business and reform public services.

Educating education.

If we do what we've always done, we'll get what we've always got. We need to ensure the right decisions are being made about UK education and about skills supply. Not based simply on the experience and knowledge of those in education, or of young people, or parents, or the media – but on what the country actually needs.

The truth is the education system needs more help getting it right, more often. It requires new partners with informed views and fresh perspectives. It's the way to a more modern, more prosperous and more socially mobile society.

That's why the demand-side needs of employers in the private sector and in public services should form the starting-point for education and training.

That's why we need Sector Skills Agreements.

What are Sector Skills Agreements?

They're about everyone concerned playing their part more effectively for the greater good. Sector Skills Agreements are partnerships between the demand side (employers) and the supply side (qualification developers, schools, colleges, training providers, universities and the bodies that fund them) ensuring the requisite numbers of people are skilled in the specified ways to meet the needs of UK businesses and public services.

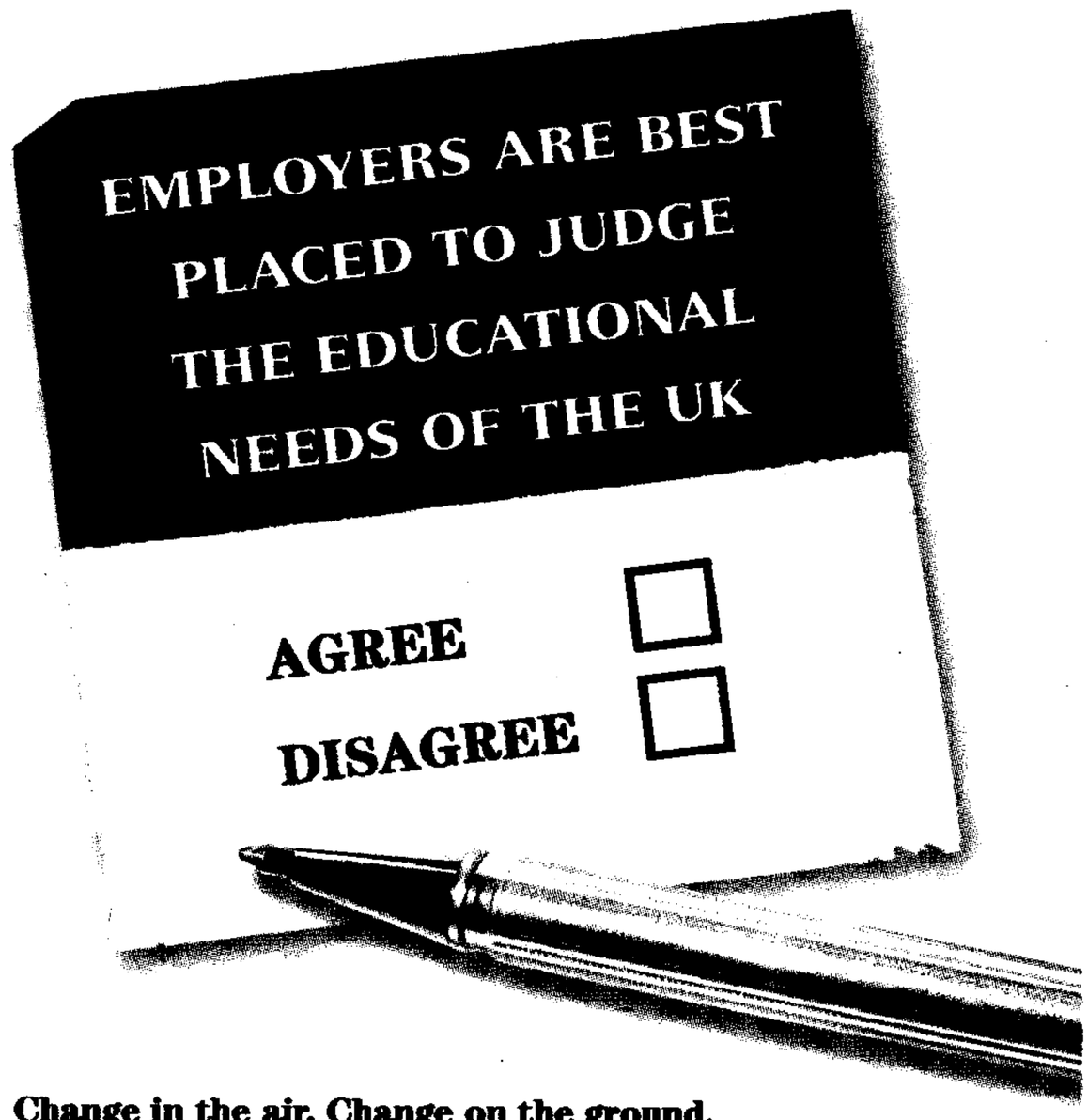
The Skills for Business network.

By mid-2005, this network will consist of 25 Sector Skills Councils covering 85% of the UK workforce. And these independent, employer-led, UK-wide bodies will champion the Sector Skills Agreements.

Put simply, Sector Skills Councils find out what employers need now and will need in the future, assess what resource is already out there, and then create comprehensive deals with supply-side partners to fill skills gaps and shortages.

Employing employers.

For the first time, Sector Skills Councils have given employers real influence in the way skills are developed and delivered throughout the UK. By bringing employers and the supply side together, Sector Skills Councils aim to improve numeracy, literacy, craft, scientific and technological skills as well as the highest levels of management and leadership skills.



Change in the air. Change on the ground.

Sector Skills Councils are already working in partnership with relevant bodies across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The momentum and enthusiasm exist to create and deliver fundamental change. Strong partnerships between employers and educational and training bodies are currently being forged to tackle skills gaps and shortages.

Four pathfinding Sector Skills Councils are in the process of drawing up their Sector Skills Agreements: e-skills UK, SEMTA (the Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies Alliance), ConstructionSkills and Skillset (Audio Visual Industries).

Skillset, for example, has set up 'A Bigger Future, the UK Film Skills Strategy'. It has a five-year plan and a £50m strategy to stabilise the industry in the face of increasing global competition. Amongst its initiatives are mentoring systems using 25 big name industry professionals as well as the establishment of Skillset Screen Academies at further and higher education levels to promote excellence in the £5bn UK film industry.

Success is a door marked push.

It is already happening. The future is in motion. It is all around us, and it's all centred around Sector Skills Councils. They are at the heart of the nationwide drive to improve the UK's productivity, with all its associated social benefits. And, for once, employers are perfectly placed – not just to have their say – but to have their way.

To find out how to contact your SSC, call now on 08000 644 044 or visit www.skillsforbusiness.org.uk

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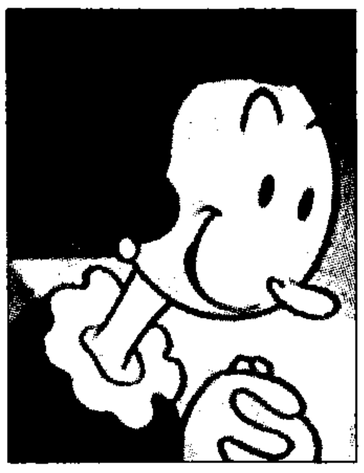
Oyl



Rice

Sir,

Have you noticed the resemblance between Condoleezza Rice and Olive Oyl? They are both attracted to men who don't realise their own strength!

PETER SCOTT,

Great Bromley, Colchester.

New Labour, old slogans

Sir,

The shiny new Labour slogan "Forwards not Backwards" is not the only slogan borrowed from the former East German communist regime. They also had the slogan "Bildung, Bildung, Bildung" – to the British electorate more familiar by its English translation "Education, Education, Education". The former communist regime also seems to have inspired Labour's introduction of paying a sum of money to newly-born children; the East German communists did so too, the idea being that no child should grow up in poverty. I am sure, upon more careful investigation, we'd find a few more slogans or policies which match.

Yours sincerely,
RUTH SCHANZ-HARPER,

Via email.

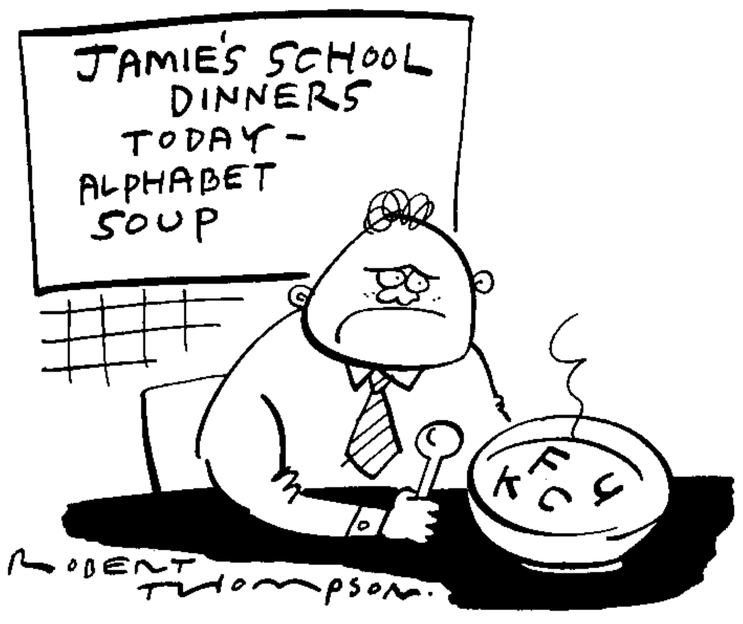
German lesson

Sir,

At the risk of being pedantic, Erich Honnecker was the man in charge of planning and building the Berlin wall. The orders, however, were issued by Walter Ulbricht, then leader of East Germany and a communist of local breed (as opposed to Honnecker, who came from the west). He became famous for the statement he made on the very eve of the event: "Niemand will eine Mauer bauen!" (Nobody wishes to build a wall).

Yours faithfully,
KLAUS NOLL,

Via email.



Fear and loathing

Sir,

Whoever thought the "Uncle Sham" piece and its associated cartoon was a good idea should be, in the words of the good doctor, "put to sleep". That cartoon (Eye 1127, p26) was beyond belief. A man is dead, and by his own hand. Have you NO respect for his family or friends at all?

Granted, the response of the press over here was a little hard to fathom in some ways, as most of the readership of today's press wouldn't have the first idea who HST was (and therefore the press's reaction was open to question) but what followed was in many ways just plain WRONG.

He was a far better writer even in his last few years of ill-health than ANY of you guys, so just admit it. You can't expect a 67-year-old bloke to be "going out to report"; guys like Charles Wheeler are an exception, for God's sake, and anyway he made me laugh and think far more than you Oxbridge boys. For a better review/obit., readers should look at www.ralphsteadman.com In the meantime, the cartoonist should shoot HIMself, by any measure of common decency. You worthless twats. I've been reading this organ for 30 years and you've finally pissed me off. Kill the cartoonist. Now.

SIMON CALKIN,

Via email.

Sir,

While it might be wrong to compare Thompson to Wolfe, at least Wolfe understood what the man was about and had a little more respect for his ability.

ROSS SPENCER,

Via email.

Sir,

Re your cartoon of the late Hunter S. Thompson on page 29 of PE 1127, blowing his brains out. You really should be a bit ashamed of yourselves, you know.

However, I did laugh out loud and so I suppose I should be ashamed of myself.

Keep up the good work.

Regards,
HOWARD LEECH,

Via email.

Crazy Naim, crazy guy

Sir,

I have been a reader of Private Eye since the beginning, and I am very fond of it. It therefore upsets me when you act in a foolish manner, as you did in the Bookworm column on 4 March (1127). Bookworm wonders what motivated the Independent's profile of Naim Attallah, which I have not read.

I, on the other hand, wonder what motivated his rather nasty, rather petty (the least convincing wig, for instance) and rather offensive piece about Attallah.

Naim Attallah is a genuine eccentric and, fundamentally, a kind and good person. He has done a number of silly things in his day. He has also done many more brave and admirable ones.

In particular, by publishing books about Palestine and Lebanon (God Cried), which no other publisher would consider touching, for fear of offending the powerful and vindictive Zionist lobby. And, daring to write freely about the disgusting way in which successive Israeli governments have persecuted and abused the unhappy Palestinian people, who were originally betrayed by the British, and subsequently bullied and double-crossed by the Americans.

Naim has consistently tried to tell the truth about all this. Well done him.

Yours sincerely,
SIR DENNIS WALTERS,

London SW3.

Scenes You Seldom See

"Excuse me, sir. I'm a big Bob Marley fan and I was wondering if you know where I can get hold of some of his early vinyl?"

Wages of sin

Sir,

Your usually excellent Number Crunching (p. 8, Eye 1127) feature comparing the wages of Geoff Hoon (133k) and the lowest rank of soldier (13k) in Iraq fails, as it doesn't compare like with like. One is trained to ambush, crawl through gutters and attack their enemy ferociously, while the other is a soldier.

Whatever your thoughts on the pay of politicians, comparing the wages of a government minister with a soldier is no more relevant than, say, comparing the wages of a journalist writing schoolboy jokes about high-ranking figures in a country and a soldier serving that country.

I need to be a lot more offended before I cancel my subscription however. Keep up the good work.

MARK LEPINE,

Hong Kong.

"Daddy Bear brought the candlestick down on Goldilocks's head. Not too hard, not too soft, but just right, conforming to Home Office guidelines"

Song of praise

Sir,

I feel that your article on Sharon Osbourne and the ASDA adverts was misleading in one respect. You mention her husband being sued after "a child committed suicide after listening to one of his songs". The "child" was a 14-year-old boy whose father either allowed him, or failed to stop him, habitually driving round in a truck while drunk with a loaded shotgun handy. The same father decided that when his son shot himself, it was an Osbourne song condemning suicide, Suicide Solution, which was to blame, not his own immaculate parenting skills. There was no suggestion that the boy had recently listened to the song, only that he had once mentioned it to a friend. Not surprisingly, the jury found in Ozzy's favour.

STEVE WILSON,

Via email.

For suckers only

The Inner Circle

T.C. Boyle

(Bloomsbury, £16.99)

WHY the sudden interest in Kinsey? In his books, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* and its companion volume, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female*, the man known as Dr Sex revealed to post-war Americans just what their neighbours, supposedly, were really up to in the bedroom. Where, when, what, who, how. (How big, how long, how often. And how!)

It was all pretty exciting in 1948, when fellatio between consenting married adults was still a criminal offence in some states. But is it really that interesting now, when our media are saturated with technical details of the sex lives of persons of no possible interest to anyone? When the very notions of shame and self-respect have been gleefully defenestrated in favour of non-judgemental inclusiveness, no fault reassurance and celebrity at any price?

Yet despite (or perhaps because of) all this, Dr Kinsey is once again a hot property. A film starring Liam Neeson is about to come to a cinema near you. There are no fewer than four biographies already in existence, two of them published this year. And now T.C. Boyle, having depicted the sexual liberation of the hippie era in his last novel, *Drop City*, has turned his attention to the liberator himself.

The film, written and directed by Bill Condon, uses the framing device of one of Kinsey's probing interviews to chart the biologist's journey from obscurity (as a specialist on wasps) to global fame. Whatever liberties it takes with the facts, it does at least claim to be based on the true events, some of which were fairly sensational. For Kinsey not only studied sex, he also practised what he preached.

Boyle approaches the same subject through the medium of fiction, which allows him to make the facts fit the story rather than the other way round. He retains the central figure of Professor Kinsey, or "Prok" as his co-workers call him, and Kinsey's wife Clara McMillen, known as "Mac". But he replaces his three main researchers with a fictitious trio, one of whom is the narrator, John Milk.

The resulting portrait of Kinsey may be accurate, and some or all of the incidents in the book may be based on real events. The problem is that, as with the answers given by his thousands of willing (often paid) interviewees, you just don't know how much of it to believe.

Another problem is that Milk himself is a dull dog, and in his company even the most sensational reportage of Kinsey's researches begins to seem routine and workaday. Work is what it was for them, of course; but for these members of the Inner Circle of the title the work spilled over into their private life rather more than with most jobs, Kinsey expecting his researchers to have sex with him (all in the name of science, of course) and to bring in their wives for pioneering sessions of sexual experimentation. So much for the detached observer.

It all begins when Milk, as an Eng Lit student at Indiana University in 1939, is persuaded to enter into a sham engagement with a cock-teasing cheerleader in order to get them both on to a "marriage course" given by Kinsey. What he learns there opens his eyes, if not his partner's legs. Soon afterwards, she throws him over for some sweaty jock and he starts helping Kinsey with his research. Drawn into the Inner Circle, he abandons his English studies and becomes Prok's trusted assistant. Prok arranges for him to sleep with Mac (the wife) and when, later, Milk's own newly married wife Iris objects to this arrangement, Prok arranges for Iris to sleep with another of his researchers.

And so it goes on. There are field trips to dingy midwestern hotels where men queue to earn a dollar by spilling their secrets and sometimes also (all for science, remember) their semen. There are interviews with women and children too. Notes are taken. Home movies shot. Index cards filed. Data amassed. And through all of this our narrator, Milk, just tells it straight, nothing extenuating nor setting down aught in malice, and with never a smirk or hint of any awareness of its more than occasional absurdity.

On one occasion Prok and Milk and another researcher hide in a closet in a call girl's room, peeping through a crack in the door while she services her clients. On another, they make a five-week expedition to New Mexico to meet the ageing Mr X whose party trick is to work himself from detumescence to climax in ten seconds. Beat that, er, meat!

Prok himself emerges a monomaniacal bore. His only recreations are gardening (in the nude) and classical music, which he lectures on rather than listens to. Milk can only admire his guru and mentor. Yet if Boyle has replaced the real researcher on whom Milk is presumably based, it seems odd he shouldn't have replaced his uncritical admiration with something a bit more sceptical or ironic. Instead, it is up to Milk's wife Iris to provide the very occasional critical comment, calling them "voyeurs" and reminding her husband that the Mr X whose experiences they are "legitimating" by wooing him for interview is also a paedophile "who masturbates infants in the cradle and rapes little boys and girls".

Both Boyle's novel and Condon's film acknowledge their debt to the four existing biographies, the best of which is probably Jonathan Gaythorne-Hardy's *Sex the Measure of All Things*. If your curiosity in Kinsey is more than merely prurient, why not go straight to the source? The truth is probably far stranger than the fiction of this lame pot-boyler.

D.H. Lawrence

It's about strategies to deliver more value to the plate.

JAMIE OLIVER, overheard on BBC TV

The road not taken; the path less travelled by; the fork in the way. And the decision. Either way, it has made all the difference. We reach these forks, we make our decision. And it seems a trivial matter at the time. Surely, we can retrace our steps any time we choose.

But we cannot.

Once the path has been chosen, we are stuck with it. We can only go where it leads. The other path no longer matters. As Aslan tells Lucy in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader: "Child, did I not explain to you once before that no one is ever told what would have happened?"

What would have happened had Jose Mourinho, the Chelsea manager, started Sunday's FA Cup tie against Newcastle United with his first team? What would have happened had he not made his triple substitution at half-time, when his side were a goal down?

Had Pyrrhus not fallen by a bedlam's hand in Argos or Julius Ceasar not been knifed to death? They are not to be thought away. Time has branded them and fettered they are lodged in the room of the infinite possibilities they have ousted. But can these have been possible seeing that they never were? Or was that only possible which came to pass?

Dedalus is always pithy. And there, lodged in the room of infinite possibilities, are other versions of the match Chelsea played against Newcastle.

SIMON BARNES
The Times

Ricks smiles and says he gave up golf 'when the Conservative party [sic] invaded Suez. It might not seem much of a gesture, but it mattered to me and I think it sent a pretty clear signal.'

Profile of CHRISTOPHER RICKS
Guardian Saturday Review

Mr Tom Sutcliffe (Southwark) to move as an amendment:

35. 'After paragraph (b) insert as a new paragraph:

"(c) celebrate Anglicanism's traditional emphasis on provincial and congregational responsibility, its rejection of pretensions to universality, and its commitment to theological and human reason; and".

And re-letter the remaining paragraph accordingly'

The General Synod considers the Windsor Report

That night was so magical. He was pretending he was Tommy Steele (I think he'd rather be a vaudeville act than a pop star), doing little dances for me, chatting to me about life, love and death, smoking heroin all night long. I think I became passively addicted to heroin that night.

He also allowed me to help him with the lyrics for a song that became the B-side of the first Babyshambles hit, Killamangiro. It was then that I realised just how smart he was – he rhymed green with spleen and even understood the medieval meaning of the word spleen.

MAX CARLISH on an evening with Pete Doherty, *Guardian*

CONTRIBUTORS: David Newell, David Laffin, Jane Farrell, Anonymous Synod member, Rick Bryant.

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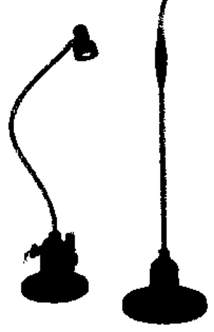

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"Why Everything Is Going To Get Worse Before It Gets Better"

(And What You Can Do About It)

Vernon Coleman

Britain's health service is so bad that asylum seekers go home for treatment when they fall ill. Our education system is so bad that illiteracy is commonplace. Millions no longer respect the courts or the police. Virtually no one now trusts our financial institutions. Our country is run by a war criminal who glibly dismisses our outrage at his murderous policies.

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In his widely acclaimed new book *Why Everything Is Going To Get Worse Before It Gets Better (And What You Can Do About It)* campaigning author Vernon Coleman explains how we've been betrayed by our Government (which has taken away our freedom and our privacy and which deliberately uses fear to promote its policies), why our lives are run not by people but by organisations and why we are now living in a fascist state – where the rights of individuals come second to the demands of the system. *Why Everything Is Going To Get Worse Before It Gets Better (And What You Can Do About It)* explains why things are going to get worse, how we can rescue ourselves, how we can save our country and what we can do to protect ourselves and our loved ones. Vernon Coleman also explains how you can make your voice heard at the next election without abstaining and without voting for the moronic bastards who represent the three main parties.

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BORN NOT TO BE QUEEN

by DAME SYLVIE KRIN, author of *La Dame Aux Camillas*, *Born To Be Queen*, *Heir of Sorrows*, etc.

THE STORY SO FAR: With the wedding only weeks away, Charles is in Australia.

Now read on...

"AND, after the break, Prince Charles goes walkabout down under."

Camilla sat shivering in front of the small Major Ferguson 14in black and white TV set in a corner of the Purple Drawing Room.

Why was it that, when Charles was away, the heating had to be switched off, even when outside it was 10 degrees below zero?

He had once explained that it was the Royal contribution to "preventing those greenhouse gas thingies".

But, even so, it seemed a bit much that she had to light up another Capita Full Strength just to keep herself warm.

"And today the Prince had a real treat," chirped the newscaster, "as he was greeted in the tiny aboriginal settlement of Dongawanga by some local beauties in their traditional costume."

And there he was, her betrothed, standing in the bright antipodean sunshine, laughing and chatting with a group of nubile, bare-breasted young girls, as they playfully hung garlands of *rumpipumpi* flowers round his neck.

"No wonder the Prince looks so happy and relaxed, thousands of miles from all the troubles and worries back home."

"Thanks a bunch," Camilla snapped at the television, as she jammed her finger down on the 'off' button.

Troubles and worries were all she had been left with, she thought, as Charles cavorted carefree round the globe on his prolonged winter break.

And who was left to sort out the 101 things which needed to be dealt with in the run-up to a wedding? Even a low-key, cut-price, hole-in-corner affair like the one that her dear future mother-in-law had decreed was all that they could expect?

Camilla walked wearily over to the antique Chippenpin escritoire, piled high with all the invitations to the reception.

She read again with mounting anger the wording that had been decided on by the Royal secretarial staff, with the help of Lord Falconer, the Lord Chancellor:

"Charles and Camilla invite you to an informal celebration following their civil marriage at the Windsor Registry Office. Finger buffet only. Bring a bottle. Dress: Smart Casual. Sponsored by Tesco."

And who were all these people whom Charles had insisted should be on the list? The Chief Imam of Tunbridge Wells.

The Secretary of the Organic Prayer Book Society. The Chair of the Welsh Women's League Against Windfarms.

How on earth were they going to fit in with such glittering figures as Sir Stephen Fry, Dame Joanna Lumley and Lord David Frost – let alone her own old horsey friends, such as Bunty Tulkinghorn or Roddy McCartney-Snape? The whole thing was too awful for words...

"IT WAS too awful for words!" Charles smiled at Camilla, looking more tanned and healthy than she'd seen him for years. "Very hot and jolly boring."

He was followed into the hallway by Sir Alan Fitztightly, staggering slightly under twelve suitcases.

"Be careful of that one," Charles hastily advised his equerry, pointing to a leather trunk. "It's got a live wombat inside."

"Well, you certainly looked as if you were enjoying yourself," Camilla countered coldly. "I saw the way you were flirting with those native girls."

"Oh, come on, old girl, one has to do that sort of thing in the line of duty. Dancing girls, receptions, you have to put on a bit of a show, smile at everyone, wave at the Abos – that's what the punters come for.

"And, anyway, when we're hitched you'll be coming with me on these jaunts. Well, probably, some of the time, now and again, once in a while, er..."

Sir Alan coughed politely. "And what would you like me to do with the wombat, sir?" he said, as he attempted to restrain the somewhat lively marsupial, as it climbed out of the trunk and began eating his velvet knee-breeches.

"Er, put him anywhere. Put him in the guest's bath, and we'll sort him out later," muttered the Prince, somewhat distracted by Camilla's obvious froideur.

Charles placed what he hoped was a soothing hand on her shoulder.

"Don't take on, old girl," he reassured her. "I've got a really wonderful surprise for you. It'll make up for all that disappointment business over the wedding."

"A present! What could it be?" Camilla's girlish excitement overcame her hostility.

A huge, priceless diamond from Digger's Rock? A flawless coral necklace from the Great Ticket Barrier Reef? An island of her own in the blue waters of the Greer Gulf?

"Give me a clue, Chazza," she pleaded, her voice trembling with expectation.

"Well, it's very small and you can lick it," he said, with a teasing smile.

"Don't be disgusting," she reprimanded.

"No, no, no, you silly sausage. It's our own stamp," he said, pulling out his wallet and extracting a small, square piece of paper for her approval.

"You see," he said, "it's us. You and me. Together. It's the highest honour the country can bestow. This is a real sign that we've been accepted."

Camilla, however, looked at him with a face of stone. "It's a bit crowded on this stamp," she said icily.

"What do you mean?" Charles wrinkled his brow in puzzlement.

"There are three people on this stamp. You, me and your bloody mother, up in the corner, staring at us."

"But she's always there," Charles protested.

"That's what I bloody well mean," Camilla exploded.

But before she could say any more, there was a cry of pain from the upstairs bathroom where the wombat had broken loose and fastened its teeth into the fleshy thigh of Sir Alan Fitztightly. It wasn't the only pain being endured in that small corner of Highgrove.

(To be continued...)

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